This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600069993%

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"GREYMORE."

"Who shall win my lady fair?
. . . . . .
The bravest man, that best love can,
Shall win my lady fair."
Madrigal.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1862.
The right of Translation is reserved.

250. h. 137.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY R. BORN, GLOUCESTER STREET,
REGENT'S PARK.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

CHAPTER I.

A RIDDLE.

The morning room at the Laurels looked very bright and pleasant, with the soft September sunshine streaming through the muslin curtains, and falling on the light chestnut hair of Amy Constable, as she stood in the window, looking out upon the smooth green lawn, with its gay flower-beds and belt of dark evergreens. The little iron gate, half hidden in the shrubs, turned suddenly on its hinges, and a lady walked up the gravel path.

"Mamma, here is Mrs. Lyttelton!" exclaimed Amy, turning to her mother, who was writing at the other end of the room. "Shall I open the door for her?"

Mrs. Constable raised her head, and gave an affirmative nod. She was a stately-looking woman, with a fair face and gentle expression, not, however, without marks of firmness traceable about the mouth. She was dressed in black silk, and her cap, though not precisely that of the first stage of widowhood, was made with a careful simplicity, and seemed to be of a fashion that was never to be changed.

The visitor, who entered the room with Amy, was a very different-looking person. Of a plump figure, comely, round face, and busy, decided manner, Mrs. Lyttelton would at once have been guessed for what she was, the mother of a large family, and the mistress of the principal mansion in the village—not a Hall nor a Park, nor even an

ancient Manor, but the simple, roomy, old-fashioned place, which rejoiced in the name of Wynthorpe House. She came in with the air of a person who has not much time to lose; and, after the first cordial greetings, entered upon the business which had led her to call, in passing the house, and which was that of inviting Mrs. Constable and Amy to dine at the House, on the following evening, to meet some new people who had lately come to live in the neighbourhood, Mr. and Miss Clyde.

The invitation was immediately accepted, and, by Amy, with some enthusiasm, as she wished to meet Miss Clyde, whom she had seen at church, and greatly admired.

"But you have called upon them, surely?" said Mrs. Lyttelton.

"Oh, yes; but Miss Clyde was out, and Mrs. Clyde does not see visitors, and when the visit was returned we were out; but

what do you think of them, Mrs. Lyttelton?"

"Why, Amy, I hardly know; Mr. Clyde is a thorough gentleman, and Miss Clyde is handsome and lady-like, but the girls and I did not get on much with her. She has a variable manner; seems interested in what one says at one moment, and indifferent the next. However, you will judge for yourself. And I must not stay—I have a box to send off to Sydney to-day, and I am going to see if I can get any of Betty Pearson's apples for him. He says they are better than any in our own orchard; so good-bye to you both. Writing to Lionel, Mrs. Constable? Give my love to him, and say we hope he will come down before the shooting is good for nothing. Good-bye again."

Mrs. Lyttelton departed, and Mrs. Constable continued her letter to her son, a rising young barrister in London; whilst Amy withdrew to her own room, to decide what

dress she should wear the following evening, and to wonder what kind of person Miss Clyde would prove, and whether her advent would have much influence over the social circle.

The Clydes were quite strangers at Wynthorpe, and all that was known of Mr. Clyde when he came down and took the Palace—an old mansion which had once been an episcopal residence—was, that he was a wealthy London merchant, and that his house was in some way connected with South America. Mrs. Clyde was at present an invalid, and rarely appeared out of doors, and the family consisted only of a daughter, whose decided personal attractions and striking air caused some excitement amongst the youthful inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Wynthorpe was a quiet place, with but little visiting, and the Clydes had not dined out, since their arrival, before the dinner given in their honour by the Lytteltons,

which was not at all a formal affair. Only the Constables, and the clergyman and his wife, were invited to meet the strangers, with exception of a young farming bachelor from Woodstone, who had just begun to pay rather suspicious attention to Helen Lyttelton, the eldest daughter of the house.

Amy and her mother arrived early, and were comfortably established in the drawing-room before the Clydes entered. Miss Clyde came in, leaning on her father's arm, and the first sight of her arrested Amy's attention. She was not exactly tall, though decidedly above the middle height, and her figure was slight and elegant. Her head was remarkably well-formed, and beautifully set on; and her abundant dark hair was arranged so as to show the tips of her delicate ears, and to mark the outline of her face in a graceful line, harmonising exactly with the perfect curve of her neck and shoulders. Her complexion was fair and

clear, but not brilliant; her features small and regular, and her eyes large and dark, slightly shadowed by her broad white brow; the eyebrows almost straight, and forming a clearly-defined, slender line. Her mouth was flexible, and capable of relaxing into the most enchanting smile; but at present the lips were firmly closed, and an expression of mingled restlessness and discontent hovered over them.

After the first interchange of civilities, she remained silent, unless particularly addressed, and her manner struck Amy as being very dignified and reserved. In a short time, however, she found reason to modify her opinion; for, at dinner, Miss Clyde, becoming animated by something that was said by her neighbour, Fred Lyttelton, spoke so gaily, and laughed so cheerily, that Amy could not consider her the sage individual she had at first imagined her. For Fred's wit was none of the

brightest, and if his jokes could amuse her, and draw her forth, it was clear she could not be a very formidable person to get on with.

In the drawing-room, amongst the ladies, Miss Clyde's spirits again deserted her; she talked, it is true, admired Dora's drawings, entered into the merits of two rival work-patterns which Helen was exhibiting, and discussed gardening with Mrs. Constable and Amy; but her manner was indifferent and uninterested, and her laugh had a forced air about it. Amy was puzzled; she did not think she should ever be able to make a friend of Miss Clyde, yet she longed to know more of her, and did not even resent the tone of half-patronage which the young woman of two-and-twenty adopted, probably unconsciously, to the girl of seventeen.

"I hope Mrs. Clyde finds the air of this place agree with her," said Mrs. Newton, the

clergyman's wife, interrupting Amy's attempts at conversation with Miss Clyde.

"Thank you, she has been as well as usual since we came here."

"I am sure I am glad to hear it," said Mrs. Newton, with a considerable expression of interest, yet mouthing her phrases so as to give a rather tiresome impression to her listener; "and, Miss Clyde, I hope you too like the neighbourhood. You will find us very quiet here; not much amusement for a young person like yourself, accustomed, no doubt, to a good deal of gaiety, coming from London."

"I have not been accustomed to much gaiety, and I am glad to be in the country," answered Miss Clyde.

"Indeed! Then you will be contented perhaps — and I daresay you have many resources; and if people can occupy themselves, and have good spirits, I always say the place does not signify. And we have

some objects of interest in this neighbourhood — some monastic ruins, which will make a little change for you, as you have nothing of the kind near London. And no doubt you are musical: really, what an advantage that is! My daughter Georgy, before she married, could always find amusement at the instrument."

"You must miss her very much, I should think."

"Yes, indeed, it is a trial; but we must expect young people to settle themselves in life, and if they do so to the satisfaction of their parents, nothing more can be desired."

"Certainly not — for the parents," said Miss Clyde, with some emphasis.

"It is pleasant, too," continued Mrs. Newton, "to watch young people as they become intimate with each other, particularly when they are not nearly connected with us. Matters seem rather promising in that quarter now," and Mrs. Newton glanced

across the room towards Helen Lyttelton, who had just been joined by young Heywood, and who certainly seemed far from displeased at his approach.

Miss Clyde followed the glance with her eyes, and something like an expression of scorn flitted across her face, but she only said,

"Oh, indeed! I am not yet instructed in all the *affaires de cœur* that are going on in this part of the world."

"And I daresay you do not feel much interest yet in the gossip of the place. As I often say to Mr. Newton, the beauty of living in London is, that you need not know your next-door neighbour, whilst here every little thing is known. I assure you, Miss Clyde, I feel the difference, for I lived in London for some years when I was a girl."

Here Mrs. Newton was interrupted by Fred Lyttelton, who, seeing Miss Clyde's

wearied look, and remembering how different she had looked at dinner, approached to her relief. He was not a very entertaining companion, but there was more amusement in laughing with or at him than in listening to Mrs. Newton; so Miss Clyde again brightened into a sort of fitful animation. Soon afterwards music was proposed, and, after a duet from the daughters of the house, Miss Clyde was asked to play or sing. She complied immediately, and going to the piano, played the introductory chords to Longfellow's ballad: "It is not always May."

Her voice was remarkably rich and sweet, and she had it under perfect control. She sang at first without much feeling, but warmed up into vehemence towards the close of the song, which she gave with a passionate *abandon*, and a tone of thrilling regret on the last line, that almost startled her hearers.

She was greatly applauded, of course, par-

ticularly by Mrs. Newton, who told Mrs. Constable that she was sure that Miss Clyde had been very well taught, as she knew it was the way with first-rate masters to make their pupils reserve themselves for the close of the performance, and that the dwelling with powerful expression on the last few notes was a favourite trick.

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Constable, "but Miss Clyde's singing does not seem made up of tricks; but listen, she is singing again."

This time the song was of a different stamp; it was one of those gay, brilliant Italian cavatinas which frequently occur at the close of an opera, and in which joy appears to rise into passion. And with strange passion it was sung; the rapture seemed pitched so high as to be almost unnatural, and to make the depressed look which returned to Miss Clyde's features after she had concluded it painfully conspicuous.

She refused to sing any more, and was very quiet during the remainder of the evening. She and her father did not stay late, and when they had gone an air of constraint was removed from the rest of the party. How it was, no one knew; but it was agreed on all sides that Miss Clyde was a difficult person to understand.

CHAPTER II.

THE PALACE.

WYNTHORPE PALACE was an old stone building, having several gables, adorned with various ornamentations, that did not appear to belong to any particular style of architecture. The windows were irregular —some of modern shape and size, others of ecclesiastical form, and with deep mullions— but all alike shaded by flowering creepers and climbing roses, or wreathed with luxuriant ivy. Over the door, which jutted out a little from the building, were

quaint devices and episcopal bearings; the entrance was level with the terrace, which ran along the front of the edifice, and from which a flight of steps, cut into the turf bank, led on either side to the grass enclosure below, a space scarcely large enough to deserve the name of a park, but resembling rather a hilly, tree-sprinkled field, and boarded by a thick ring of sombre fir-trees. Behind, and at the sides of the house, the ground rose, and was well-wooded —so that the old Palace was well sheltered from cold blasts, and was scarcely visible from any neighbouring road, except that in front, which led to the village.

From the terrace, however, the view was wide and varied; a rich yet not tame landscape lay stretched, map-like, beyond the fir plantations; hamlets were seen dispersed amongst the fields and woods; whilst, on clear days, might be traced, embosomed in deep forest, faint outlines of an ancient grey

building, the gem of the whole vale, the famed abbey of Glendale.

A chain of rounded, heath-covered hills bounded this view, upon which Beatrice Clyde was now looking vaguely, rather than with the eye of observation. It was a clear, bright morning, and, as she stood leaning against the railings which bordered the terrace, she seemed to gain new beauty from the fresh breeze and animating sunshine. There was an open, candid expression on her features, utterly different from either the random gaiety which had flashed across them, at intervals, the night before, or the listless pensiveness which had shaded them. She looked younger, better, happier, more as nature had intended her to look, but as, unfortunately, she seldom did look; for her youth had suffered a blight which had embittered and partially warped a disposition naturally sweet and noble; and which led her into frequent inconsistencies, all the

3

more because her spirit was high, and her craving for happiness intense.

"Ah, Beatrice!" said Mr. Clyde, who had just appeared from the house, as he joined his daughter, "out already! You look as fresh as a rose this morning. I think your dissipation last night has done you good."

A slight shade passed over Beatrice's face.

"Oh, I don't think it could affect me much in any way. I was never at a more stupid party in my life."

"You appeared to enjoy it, I thought, part of the time."

"You mean when I was talking with that young Lyttelton? Yes, he amused me rather."

"A worthy young man he seems," said her father, somewhat gravely; "but I did not see anything very amusing about him."

"Well, not exactly, but——"

"I think I know what you mean; but, Beatrice, there are some ways of amusing

yourself which I do not wish you to follow. *You*, of all people, should be on your guard against——"

"Really, papa, what a sermon!" Beatrice's cheeks flushed proudly as she turned to go into the house. "I don't think I have ever given cause for such warnings, and there is not much fear that I ever shall. I did not think you could talk in such a womanish way."

"I must watch you as a woman would: your mother is not able to be a guard to you."

Beatrice made no reply, but went into the house, and proceeded to the breakfast-room. No further allusion was made to the occurrences of the evening before, and her countenance appeared again unclouded. She talked cheerfully with her father on various subjects, chiefly general and literary rather than personal. When the letters and newspapers were brought in, she rose from the break-

fast-table, saying she must go and see her mother, and, passing through some curious up-and-down passages, and mounting a wide flight of stairs, with heavy oak balustrades, she reached a landing from which a door opened into her mother's dressing-room. She paused a moment before entering, even after a soft "come in" had given the desired permission. It seemed as if some effort were necessary either to compose her features to a particular expression, or to train her mind to a certain set of thoughts, before she could appear before her mother.

She went into the room, however, bright and beaming—as her father had said, "as fresh as a rose"—and kissed the pale, delicate face, reclining amidst luxurious pillows, with a warmth and heartiness that called forth a smile and a look of animation upon the invalid's countenance.

Mrs. Clyde was a very pretty woman still, and had been a beauty; her features

resembled those of Beatrice, but were without their fire and intelligence; and when the first pleasure of the greeting had died away, they assumed a querulous air, such as those of Beatrice could never have worn, by any possibility.

Any one who had now heard the lively description given by Beatrice of the people she had met the night before, would scarcely have believed her to be the same girl who had sat silent and sarcastic in Mrs. Lyttelton's drawing-room.

"Shall you find nice companions in the girls, do you think?" asked Mrs. Clyde, after Beatrice had been laughing at Mrs. Newton's recommendation of "monastic ruins" to her as a little diversion.

"I don't know; I like the youngest Miss Lyttelton, and a sweet-looking little thing, Amy Constable, the best. Miss Dora Lyttelton is one of those quiet, proper girls to whom I have an aversion."

"I thought you liked quiet people."

"So I do, sometimes; but she is—oh! I know so exactly what people say of her—that she could not do an unladylike thing."

"Well, my dear, I am sure they would say that of you."

"I don't mean the same thing. I mean that the lady is more in her than the woman. And yet, she is feminine, excels in work, I feel sure, and is fond of gardening, and is the kind of woman men like to protect, and so on — and she would never speak too openly, or laugh too loud, or do anything at a wrong time. But it is foolish to take a dislike to one who is doubtless a very excellent person."

"But Miss Lyttelton—the eldest—what is she?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Beatrice, with a change of tone—a something scarcely describable, but which grated unpleasantly on the ear; "she was occupied all the

night with an adorer, a Mr. Heywood; and, from what Mrs. Newton told me, the affair is likely to prove a serious one. They had only eyes for each other, of course, and fancied that no one else had ears, for they were not careful enough to prevent some stray words reaching me. I tried in vain not to hear, when we were all standing near the piano, but they were so wrapt up in each other, that they seemed unconscious that anyone else was there. How can people be so absurd?"

Beatrice turned away, and began to search amongst the books and papers on the table.

"Poor child!" murmured Mrs. Clyde, in a half-audible voice. Why Beatrice was to be pitied seemed scarcely clear, yet there was something rather painful in hearing the almost sneering tone used by one young woman in speaking of the innocent happiness of another. When Beatrice spoke again

her manner was different, and her voice had resumed the playful, almost child-like intonation she adopted towards her mother. She talked of flowers, birds, dresses, work-patterns, in as feminine a style as her aversion, Dora Lyttelton, could have done, until at length Mrs. Clyde dismissed her to her own pursuits, saying she should like to read a little.

"I am interested in that book you began to me yesterday; I will go on with it by myself. You don't care much for novels, Beatrice, but I am sure this is a good one."

"I know it is, and I have skimmed through it," said Beatrice, placing the first volume of "Agatha's Husband" in her mother's hands; "only one gets tired of so much love—all the books bring it so perpetually before one."

"That is because young people hardly ever tire of hearing about it."

"Perhaps so; they have either experienced, or hope to experience it."

Beatrice left the room as she spoke, and repaired to her own little study, where she soon buried herself in German metaphysics. But the mood did not last long, and it was a relief to her when her father knocked at her door, and asked her to ride with him.

Beatrice was an enthusiastic and daring horsewoman; and as she flew along, with the wind beating against her face, and felt beneath her the spirited movements of her favourite Arabian, she experienced for the time a keen enjoyment of animal life, which satisfied her thirst for happiness more than anything she knew. Mr. Clyde was as fond of exercise as his daughter, and he proposed that they should extend their ride to Railton, a town about seven miles off, where he had some business.

Beatrice was quite willing, and, carried away by the excitement of exercise, and the

clear autumn air, she did not relax her speed until they had reached the entrance of the town. Railton was a rather large place, boasting a cathedral, a gaol, a town-hall, and barracks. But it was somewhat quiet, notwithstanding these pretensions: there was little trade to render it bustling, or gaiety to enliven it, and not enough traffic along the streets to make the vision of Beatrice and her father as they rode through unremarked.

"There's a fine girl!" said young Captain Denbigh, of the 121st, as he stood with a knot of gentlemen at the door of the library, a few yards from the shop where Mr. and Miss Clyde were pausing. "Does anyone know who she is?"

"I do," answered Fred Lyttelton, with some importance of manner. He was very fond of riding over to Railton to see the officers, and had come this morning to offer some shooting to his particular friends,

Captain Denbigh and Mr. Curzon. "She is a Miss Clyde, and her father has just taken the old Palace."

"What Palace?"

"Ours — Wynthorpe Palace, I mean. They dined with us last night; and she sings stunningly! Ay, and talks too."

"She's very handsome, undoubtedly," said Captain Denbigh, after a rather long stare, dropping his eyes, however, the moment Beatrice drew near. He was not ungentlemanly enough to let a woman see he was staring at her.

Fred Lyttelton started forward; bowed, and flushed with pleasure in return to Beatrice's greeting; and then submitted with a good grace to the cross-questioning of his companions, on the subject of his intimacy with the Clydes.

CHAPTER III.

A RESTLESS HEART.

Not far from Wynthorpe House was a sequestered little glade, the favourite haunt of the young Lytteltons and their friends. Beatrice Clyde, in a ramble one gorgeous autumn afternoon, surprised a cluster of girls seated at work, reading, sketching trees, and chatting. She half hesitated when she saw the group, uncertain whether she had been trespassing upon forbidden ground; but the voice of Dora, who, truly, always said the right thing in the right place, re-assured her.

"We often come here on fine afternoons," said Dora, "it is such a pretty snug spot; but it does not belong to our private grounds, and is free to anyone. Will you not join us?"

Beatrice was not unwilling; she saw that Amy Constable was there, and she felt inclined to know more of her. The conversation, however, which had seemed animated enough when she approached, gradually flagged, and the attention of some of the party appeared irresistibly attracted towards a corner of the wood from which shots were occasionally heard.

Helen Lyttelton, in particular, grew silent and abstracted, and watched the path which led from the wood to the fields with increasing interest.

"Who are shooting near?" asked Beatrice of Amy, who was sitting close to her.

"The Lytteltons and some of their friends," answered Amy; "we took them luncheon

some time ago to the Lady's Planting, and there was a sort of arrangement, I believe, that they were to join us here, and walk home with us."

"You are at the Lytteltons', then?"

"I am spending the day; Agnes Gresford, a friend of mine, is staying at the House, and I am nearly always there when she is."

"I fear I am an interruption to your chat," said Beatrice; "it would be better for me to go home."

"Oh, why? The girls are quite glad to have you, and we have had enough private talk for to-day."

Beatrice raised no further objection—she almost wished she had not been drawn into this circle, yet she had been feeling lonely; her own thoughts were not pleasant companions, and a chat, even with girls for whom she did not much care, was an agreeable change. So she resolved to

stay a little longer, and went on talking.

"Miss Lyttelton looks rather abstracted," she remarked, observing that Helen had twice neglected to answer a question that had been put to her.

"She is watching for Mr. Heywood," said Amy, with a smile. "I believe they are really engaged now."

"Indeed! one always seems to fall into the midst of love-affairs wherever one goes."

"Do you think so? I am sure there have not been many here since I came, and this is the only one now."

"You are all so young," said Beatrice, "doubtless the affairs will come in time."

She spoke half-sadly, in a tone that did not suit the words. Amy looked up quickly—

"You think us very silly, I daresay; at least you would, if you heard all the things we talk about."

"Silly! oh, no — only natural. I have

not been much with young people"—Beatrice made an effort at speaking lightly—"and I am old before my time, I daresay."

"I think Jessie is the most likely of us to imitate Helen," said Amy, after a pause; "she and Mr. Curzon were going on at such a rate this morning. And I declare, there he is, the first of the party, before even Mr. Heywood!"

Beatrice looked; a slight young man, in shooting costume, had joined the group, and was exchanging banter with Jessie, a free-speaking young lady, slightly inclined to be "fast."

Beatrice rose immediately; she wished to depart before more gentlemen arrived, and she was about to bid good-bye to Helen, when a ring of shooting-coats and guns seemed formed around her, and a chorus of voices rose, entreating her to stay.

"Why cannot you come home with us?" said Dora, determined to be polite to the

belle of the neighbourhood, though she did not feel much affection for her; "Mamma will be glad if you will join us, I am sure."

"Thank you, but I am expected at home; I must say good afternoon."

"Let me walk home with you, Miss Clyde," said Fred Lyttelton, in a low voice; "it is growing dusk, and those rascally poachers are about."

"They are not likely to attack me," said Beatrice, laughing; "and I am accustomed to walk alone as late as this."

"Why don't you ask her to come in the evening?" said Captain Denbigh, apart to Jessie, "you know you promised I should hear the wonderful songstress you raved about."

"I am not in authority; you should ask Helen."

"She is too pre-occupied; but perhaps Miss Dora will listen to reason. You know there was some talk of a dance this evening,

and another lady will do no harm, for Curzon and I can dance you all off your feet."

Jessie said a few words to Dora, which had the effect of calling forth an invitation to Beatrice, to go over to the House in the evening, since she was obliged to go home to dinner. Fred seconded Dora with all his might, and Beatrice yielded. She also accepted his escort as far as the high-road, and enchanted him by talking down to his comprehension, and laughing at his jokes all the way.

At dinner she told her father of her engagement, and half apologised for leaving him to spend the evening alone; but Mr. Clyde said he was glad for her to have any change, adding,

"Your mother is pretty well to-night, so I shall go and sit with her;" and Beatrice, when she looked into her mother's dressing-room to say "good night," found her father

established in a chair close to the couch, one arm placed at the back of it, and his hand smoothing his wife's still abundant tresses with lover-like fondness. Beatrice said her adieux rather hurriedly, and went down to the carriage which was waiting to convey her to Wynthorpe House.

The ladies were in the drawing-room when she entered, and the gentlemen almost immediately joined them. Beatrice was soon monopolized by Fred, who, on every occasion when they had met, had shown a marked desire to cultivate her society.

Dancing was proposed, and of course he was her first partner, and not by any means a despicable one. Still, he was not a person to keep Beatrice's attention fully occupied, and her eyes wandered to the other couples during his most entertaining speeches.

She could not help witnessing the devotion of the betrothed pair, young Heywood and Helen Lyttelton; and Jessie and Mr.

Curzon were carrying on a flirtation which was at least equally conspicuous. Even the quiet Dora was engrossed by the soft speeches of Mr. Langdale, the young curate, who had been invited for the evening; and little Amy Constable was laughing and talking nonsense with Captain Denbigh.

"It is in real life as in books," thought Beatrice; "nothing but marrying or giving in marriage, or, if not the realities, the shadows of them." They sickened her heart, yet she could not fly from them. Were they so pleasant, these realities, that people caught at the shadows and played with them? How if she, too, joined in the game? It had been a dangerous one to many, she had been told, but there was excitement in it. Excitement and life!—and Beatrice thirsted for life, and chafed in the narrow prison in which she felt her whole being, outer and inner, fettered—and at the fate to which chance, or her evil genius, had

bound her. Freedom! Life! Joy!—for these she longed. These she knew to be unattainable. But, oh! to feel for one moment the reflected light of them! To fancy, even for a little time, that which could never be real. To guess what happiness was like. To taste, but for an instant, the highest bliss that earth could give, though conscious all the while that the bliss was hollow, the imagination of it fleeting!

She roused herself from these wild fancies. Fred was asking her if she would go on dancing.

A sudden awakening, an affirmative smile, and Beatrice danced off again. A glorious dancer she was! thought Fred—little guessing, poor fellow, in his simple-minded admiration, and with his simple ideas of woman's nature, the tempest of thought that was raging within the breast of the dainty, fairy-footed creature, whose

little feet beat time with his, as if to float for ever through life, in a ball-room, was their only business in the world.

Fred was not the only person in the room who admired Miss Clyde's waltzing. Amy Constable and Captain Denbigh were at this moment discussing it; and Amy, who had been seized with vehement admiration for Beatrice from the very first, and who lavished upon her all the raptures commonly felt by young girls towards women a few years older than themselves, who have struck their fancy, asked Captain Denbigh if he did not think Miss Clyde very beautiful?

"Beautiful? Ah — well—no—I don't know that she is quite that—but I admire her far more than a beauty. She looks so thoroughly a lady, and altogether well got up. Like one of Leech's girls in 'Punch.'"

"Oh, dear!—how can you say so? I am sure she is much more like a queen, or—or

—the heroine of a poem, or something of that sort."

Captain Denbigh laughed.

"I assure you, in comparing her to one of Leech's girls, I meant the highest compliment it was in my power to pay. They quite realize my ideal of the English lady. You don't mean to say you do not admire Leech?"

"Oh, yes, I do admire him very much; but then his pictures seem so much made up of dress, and so forth. You could not fancy the girls pretty in old-fashioned dresses, you know."

"And yet, with every change of costume, the pictures are equally attractive, so your argument proves nothing."

"Well—perhaps—but I don't like to think of Miss Clyde as a fashionable lady."

"I see you want some more romantic comparison for her. You think her like

one of Tennyson's loves—Elëanore or Margaret, perhaps?"

"Oh, rare, pale Margaret," said Amy, laughing; "no, I am not quite so foolish, Captain Denbigh, and you need not make fun of me; and everyone has finished dancing, so I should like to sit down."

Captain Denbigh led Amy to a seat and placed himself near her; for Beatrice was going to sing, and the post was a good one for hearing and seeing.

She sang one of the songs from Tennyson's "Princess," and the plaintive music seemed especially suited to her style and her rich voice, although, as Amy told Captain Dembigh, no one could sing joyous songs with more expression than Miss Clyde.

"She is splendid!—positively splendid! I must have the next dance with her!" exclaimed Captain Denbigh, more to himself than to little Amy, and he rushed up to the

piano to be introduced. People were not yet ready for another dance, and Beatrice lingered by the piano, turning over the Lyttelton's music. Captain Denbigh joined her in the enployment, and said suddenly,

"Oh! here are Mendelssohn's 'Lieder ohne Worte;' do play one of them, Miss Clyde —I am sure you know them."

Beatrice, after a hasty glance at the eager, animated face looking into hers, took the piece of music, and played one of the wildest, most passionate movements with intense energy and *abandon*.

"Ah, I know that; my mother plays it sometimes, and I always liked it; but my sister says it reminds her of trotting horses; an odd simile, is it not?"

"Yes—yet I can understand it," said Beatrice, slowly; "there is such fire in it—a wild yet steady rush—as if some great deed were to be the climax. It is one of my favourites—it is so full of life."

"Now play another darling of mine—the 'Rose on the Harp'; will you?"

Beatrice complied; the light *arpeggio* chords contrasted strangely with the vehement, swiftly-following *staccato* notes of the last piece; but they were given with equal expression, and the passion was as strong in one as in the other.

"Many thanks," said Captain Denbigh, when she had finished; "I have had a great treat—now it is time for our dance."

Beatrice danced more than once with Captain Denbigh—more times, in fact, than she ought to have done in so small a party, and more times, decidedly, than Fred Lyttelton approved. Yet he was glad that Miss Clyde seemed to appreciate Denbigh, who was the finest fellow under the sun, and the sharpest.

Beatrice did like Captain Denbigh to a certain degree; he was more entertaining than Fred; he was enthusiastic—and she

liked enthusiasm—the more because she believed she had none herself; then he talked of his mother and sisters, which she had heard few young men liked to do, and did this without being in the least a milksop.

He was thoroughly gentlemanly-looking; not handsome, but with a good manly figure; and features which, without being at all regular, were far from common-place. The eyes, too, had a good honest expression; and, with some conceit about the whole bearing of the man, there was yet a kindly air about him which invited confidence, and made him a universal favourite, except with those who were too strong-minded to forgive him his little surface affectations.

Beatrice really enjoyed her conversation with him, for he could talk on her favourite subjects—books, art, and music—if not with deep discrimination, yet with a genuine appreciation of the good and beautiful.

And then his pleasure in talking with her

was so manifest; his sympathy, when he did sympathise, so ardent; his dissent so heartily expressed, yet so regretfully, as if he almost pitied her for her opinions.

Beatrice was not vain—general admiration did not gratify her, but the kind of interest Captain Denbigh showed in her gave her a pleasant sensation, and the interest which she also began to feel in him was still a pleasanter one.

The evening drew to a close, and Beatrice said, "good night" to her entertainers with real regret. Fred took her to the carriage, but Captain Denbigh had disappeared. Before, however, she had passed the lodge-gates she heard the tramp of a horse's feet behind her, and was scarcely surprised when Captain Denbigh rode up to the side of the carriage.

"I thought you were staying all night at the Lytteltons'."

"No—Curzon is—but I prefer riding

home at night to turning out early in the morning to be in time for parade at Railton. And what can be pleasanter than a ride by moonlight?"

Beatrice looked up; she had scarcely noticed externals before; now she became aware that the scene around her was most lovely; the harvest moon, almost at its full, was shedding a rich yellow gleam on the autumn fields, tinting the tops of the oaks with mellow lustre, and casting into deeper blackness the masses of firs which shut in one side of the road.

"Yes, it is beautiful, but I am afraid I don't appreciate moonlight. One feels as if one ought to be sentimental," and she half shuddered.

"Oh, don't say sentimental—it gives me quite a different sensation. You'll laugh, I daresay, at a fellow like me talking in this way, but moonlight seems to me to stir some higher feeling within one, something

better than sentiment. I'm sure you know what I mean, or you could not play Mendelssohn's music as you do."

"Moonlight and Mendelssohn!—do they rouse the same feelings?"

"Ah, you laugh at me, and I cannot explain, yet they both do make me feel—what shall I say? Half-sad and yet happy. Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' always makes one feel how good one ought to be, and yet so awfully jolly."

Beatrice laughed.

"You may laugh—but if I could talk metaphysics, I could make you understand me, and not laugh either. However, it will be as well for me to keep within my own depth. Are you coming to our races at Railton?"

"I did not know there were to be any, and I depend entirely upon my father. If he chooses to go, I shall go too."

"But why not come with the Lytteltons?

A jolly family they are — ready for anything."

"I don't know that I should care much for the races."

"Oh, I'm sure you would— they are not of the wicked gambling sort, you know— only got up by ourselves. I am to ride."

"That is an inducement certainly," said Beatrice, laughing.

"No, I did not mean you to say that. But if you do come, and will back me in gloves, I have no doubt I shall feel inspired."

A little more light talk, and the carriage drive was reached, at which point Captain Denbigh must part from Beatrice, to pursue his way to Railton.

When he had gone, Beatrice threw herself back in the carriage with a deep sigh. She did not know why she should feel so particularly unhappy to-night, yet she was miserable. The moonlight and the beauty,

which had the effect of producing happy emotions in her late companion, filled her, on the contrary, with strange yearnings, and gave her an oppressive sense of solitude. Her own individuality seemed too heavy to bear. She half started from her seat once or twice, and stretched out her arms, as if she would have flown away—whither she knew not—anywhere, to loose the sense of self. But as the carriage wheels grated on the gravel in front of the Palace, she recovered her calmness, and schooled her face into the expression it usually wore within her own home. "How wild I am!" she said softly to herself; "I have borne my burden hitherto, and it must be borne."

Mr. Clyde met her in the hall, with the words,

"I am glad you are come, Beatrice—your mother is restless, and says she cannot sleep till you have talked to her, so go up to her at once."

Beatrice kissed her father, took her candle, and walked lightly upstairs to her mother's room.

"How late you are, child!" murmured the peevish voice of Mrs. Clyde; "what have you been doing?"

"Dancing, mamma, and singing, and laughing, and talking," said Beatrice, cheerfully; "but I am sorry I stayed so late, particularly as you cannot sleep to-night. Shall I read to you?"

"No, I would rather hear you talk—I like to hear that you have been enjoying yourself, my dear,"—Mrs. Clyde's tone grew more cordial,—"and let me look at you, love. I hardly saw you before you went."

Beatrice placed her candle on a table, and approached the bed. A lamp, which hung above the chimney-piece, illuminated her figure, and her simple white dress was well relieved by a high crimson screen which stood before the fire-place. Her dark hair

had been pushed a little further back from her brow than usual; for the night was a warm one, and, from the same cause perhaps, a rich carmine flush tinged her ordinary colourless cheeks. Her lips just parted in a gentle smile, but her eyes shone with unusual lustre, and their expression scarcely harmonised with that of the mouth. They had an excited look, or rather, perhaps, there was in them the remnant of past excitement.

Mrs. Clyde, an intense admirer of beauty, was not insensible to the brilliance of her daughter's to-night. She half sighed as she said, raising herself on one arm to look at her,

"Ah! child, you are looking your best—better, I believe, than I ever did; and yet my beauty brought me greater satisfaction than yours does to you."

"Why, mamma, I assure you I am pleased to see myself look well!" but there was a

painful quiver on Beatrice's lips as she said the words.

"When I was a girl," pursued Mrs. Clyde, "I had great pleasure in admiration, and perhaps encouraged it too much—I don't know—I never meant any harm; and when your father came, and I loved him my only joy in my beauty was to know that it gave pleasure to him. Yes, I do believe my greatest delight was to lay my triumphs at his feet. But you, Beatrice, what good is your beauty to yourself or anyone? It brings you no love, no —— Ah! when you were a baby, and people used to stop and admire you in the parks, I used to look forward to the day when I should see you the belle of ball-rooms, courted, sought after—and now, how is it? No one sees you, at least, if they do, I am not with you; and whatever admiration you gain, is spoilt to me by the thought that—of the different destiny I had planned for you."

"Dear mamma, don't excite yourself over this; admiration is vanity, and beauty worthless—so the good people say."

"Yet to see you leading this monotonous life, day after day, no one to notice—"

"Don't say so; I assure you there are people to notice me even here." Beatrice drew herself up, with a sort of mock pride. "If you had seen me to-night—yes, I do think I could have some of your sort of triumphs, if I chose."

"What? do tell me, Beatrice, dear. No; your father is so particular, he would not like it. But just tell me, did you meet any new person to-night?"

"Some officers from Railton; one of them agreeable—young though, compared with me—but I don't think he found me altogether despicable." Beatrice checked herself suddenly. "How weak I am! I have always despised this sort of thing."

Mrs. Clyde looked wistfully at the hand-

some face, kindling with mixed emotions.

"Beatrice, my dear love, I wish you could enjoy your youth."

"I do, mamma; what do I want more than I have?"

"A great many things; at least, I should have thought so, at your age. But you are more strong-minded than your mother—you have no dreams as she had."

"Have I not?" said Beatrice, sadly; looking straight before her, with the gaze that sees not present things, but is striving to pierce some vague future.

Mrs. Clyde did not speak for a minute or two, but murmured to herself, half unconsciously, one or two bars of an old song, falling gradually into the words,

> "You'll in your girls again be courted,
> And I'll go wooing in my boys."

"How do the words go, Beatrice? That old thing often comes into my head."

Beatrice did not answer, perhaps did not

hear the question; but suddenly flinging herself on an ottoman near her, the pent-up sensations of the last few hours burst forth in a torrent of involuntary, incoherent words:

"Yes, it is hard to feel unlike everyone; to see others—foolish enough they may be, but it is happiness to them; and to be solitary—quite alone. All one's best thoughts garnered up, never to be revealed—no, that is not it—I could bear solitude—but to know—oh! mother, you know something of what I feel—pity me! you can guess, surely. Now my heart seems bursting, and yet I must still it, and show myself quiet, proper, the well-regulated young lady. Oh! to be like giddy Jessie, or gentle little Amy—anything but what I am!"

"My dear, dear child!" Mrs. Clyde rose in bed, and held out her arms to the excited girl; and her voice had, if not a soothing, a silencing effect.

Beatrice choked down two or three sobs,

then raised herself from her prostrate attitude, and knelt down by her mother's bed.

"How wrong I am, dear mamma!—kiss me, and I shall be better. Yes, indeed, I will be calm again, content, and enduring. Life is not meant for happiness!"

"But such as you ought to be happy. Oh! my Beatrice, my pretty little child, that I had such sweet fancies about, if I could do anything——"

"Do not say any more, mamma; I am sorry I have disturbed you so. Try to forget it, and go to sleep—see, I am myself again!"

It was true: a pale, quiet face was now raised close to Mrs. Clyde's; only one heavy mass of hair, that had fallen loose in Beatrice's agitation, hung down her face, and swept her shoulder—otherwise she looked as she had done when she entered Mrs. Lyttelton's drawing-room that night.

Mrs. Clyde could only sigh, and shed a few tears; but the real pain, lately expressed in her voice, soon gave way to the querulous discontent more usual to it.

Beatrice noted the alteration with pleasure; she could wrestle with trifling evils, against the higher she had no power—and to see her mother a prey to them, only awoke anguish in herself. To amuse Mrs. Clyde, she now went over the history of the evening, bringing forward Captain Denbigh, for the sake of giving interest to the narrative, rather more prominently than she would otherwise have done.

"Ah! I should like him, I am sure," said Mrs. Clyde, during a pause; "and I am glad he appreciates your music. I hope you will often meet."

"I don't suppose it is very likely we shall—papa is not much inclined for society, I think."

"I will persuade him; it is too bad to be

cooped up when you are young. Well, I don't mind whatever comes, it is best to seize a little pleasure in one's youth."

"Are you sleepy now, mamma?"

"As sleepy as I shall be, I daresay—*you* are, by asking. Well, I don't want your eyes to lose their brightness by watching me."

"I will stay still longer if you like, mamma."

"No, no, my dear child, go to bed now. Good night, good night!"

Kisses, and parting words, and then Beatrice took her light, and proceeded to her own room. She was not sleepy, and placing the candle in a remote recess, she drew up the blinds of a bow window, and looked out on the flood of moonlight illumining the terrace and the landscape below. She curled herself up on a low ottoman, and clasped her hands above her head, in an attitude that might have served

a sculptor as a model for despair. But she did not long remain thus—inaction was not her nature; she rose, paced the room, pausing each time she drew near the window, to contemplate the scene below, of which the peaceful air seemed to jar upon her nerves, and yet to have a strange fascination for her. Occasionally, a wild cry rose to her lips, and then was crushed back within her breast, with the utmost force of which she was capable—the burthen of it was still, Life, Freedom, Joy!

All her capacities for happiness seemed to make themselves at once vividly felt within her, only to end in bitter longing; her youth was passing from her without granting her one moment's taste of the joy that came, unasked, to others. In vain she checked herself, and preached contentment, delight in simple things—intellectual pursuits. Mockery! the doctrines would not satisfy her, and she knew it; she thirsted

for the wine of life, the true elixir, which alone could satisfy a passionate temperament like hers, keenly sensitive to every grief, and yet more thrillingly alive to every emotion of pleasure.

Then, a recklessness for a moment took possession of her spirit. To lead a butterfly life—to grasp the fleeting delights that most nearly resembled happiness—to lose in amusement that crushing sense of destiny which for ever fell upon her with overwhelming force—to drown care in trifles—to forget—no, that could not be; she had high aspirations, grand aims, visions of a life of beauty and usefulness! Again she writhed in mental torture; her life could not be what she chose to make it—no efforts of hers could break one mesh of the net in which the whole course of her actions, even of her thoughts, was entwined. Was she free even to think her own thoughts, to dream her own dreams?

Ah!—a wild panther in its cage never dashed itself against the bars, lacerating its limbs with vain, fruitless force, more madly than Beatrice now fought in thought against the mental prison in which she felt herself bound.

The moonlight had faded before the white light of dawn ere her struggles had ended—ere she had become sufficiently calm to throw herself, chilled and exhausted, upon her bed.

CHAPTER IV.

CATCHING AT SHADOWS.

"Miss Clyde, do back me, just for half-a-dozen, against Denbigh. Monson will take you in a moment, he knows so little of me and my horse, and you will be sure to win."

Mr. Curzon was the speaker, and the scene was the grand stand on the first day of the Railton races. Beatrice's voice rose clear and gay in reply:

"I cannot, indeed—I think I made a half-promise to back Captain Denbigh; and if I have been rash, I must abide by the consequences."

"No, upon my honour, Miss Clyde, you shall not repent it. Back me to any amount—I shall be sure to win."

Captain Denbigh spoke eagerly, and looked with visible admiration on Beatrice's face, which was shaded by a most becoming hat, that would have been coquettish on almost any one else, but was not on her—her grand air prevented that. Her whole costume was perfect, and not lost upon Captain Denbigh, although his attention was considerably engrossed by his own attire, which set off his well-formed limbs to great advantage. It had occupied his thoughts for some time before, and the buff jacket and black cap had only been decided upon after having heard Beatrice say that buff was a pretty colour.

The racers started. Beatrice was the centre of a merry group, laughing and talking to the gentlemen around her, and scarcely heeding the progress of the race;

but the remarks made on all sides soon let her know that Buff and Black was gaining ground—nay, distancing all competitors.

"He will never win, though; you may consider your gloves lost, Miss Clyde," said young Heywood.

"Just like Denbigh," remarked Colonel Morley, "always spends too much energy at first. If I betted gloves, I should have opposed you, Miss Clyde, on grounds gained from observation of his character, without having an idea of his riding or his horse."

"My opportunities of observation have not been so extensive as yours, Colonel Morley," said Miss Clyde; "I would rather trust my judgment of Captain Denbigh's horsemanship than of his character."

"Yet it does not require much penetration to find it out—however, favour blinds judgment, and Denbigh is generally liked by ladies."

"And not by men?"

"Oh, yes; I did not mean to imply anything else. He is a capital fellow, Denbigh—quite refreshing to old——"

A shout stopped the speech—the race was over!

Captain Brookes first; Mr. Curzon second; Captain Denbigh nowhere. He came up, however, to the grand stand, as blithe as ever, making his way quickly to Beatrice.

"Miss Clyde—I am so sorry—upon my word—I have disgraced your choice!"

"Ladies lose greater valuables than gloves sometimes, without complaining," muttered Colonel Morley.

"No—but, really—I should like to retrieve my character; that absurd little Lilla to knock up before the end!—you will never back me again, Miss Clyde?"

"I don't know that. I shall first study your character a little, as Colonel Morley

has done. If I find you always as rash as you have shown yourself to-day, I shall certainly not risk any more gloves over you."

"Will you really study my character? Nothing would give me more pleasure."

"You are very confident."

"I don't mean to be—I don't expect the result to be favourable, but it is pleasant to be thought of."

Captain Denbigh was leaning over Beatrice's chair as he said these words, and Mrs. Carleton, one of the Railton ladies, remarked to Dora Lyttelton, that she thought Miss Clyde was carrying on a dreadful flirtation with Captain Denbigh—adding,

"Your brother Fred could do nothing but talk about her, when first he came to see us, after he had become acquainted with her; and he called her dignified, I remember. I don't see much dignity about her now, do you?"

"No," said Dora; "she can be very agreeable when she likes, and one cannot exactly find fault with her manner; but I do not think she is quite the best companion in the world for Jessie, who has taken a great fancy to her."

"That little Miss Constable seems pinned to her side, too; is she very fond of her?"

"So it seems; she fascinates these young girls, but I cannot understand why Mrs. Constable encourages the intimacy so much. Miss Clyde has been a good deal at the Laurels' lately."

"She is with your party to-day, is she not? You must introduce me, for I expect you all to go home with me to a high tea —you have dined, I hope?"

"Thank you, we dined early, that we might be free for the rest of the day—but we shall take you by storm——"

"Oh, I have set my heart on having you; and some of the officers are coming. It is

not my concern, you know, if Miss Clyde chooses to make herself conspicuous with Captain Denbigh, or anyone else."

"Of course not."

"Amy Constable grows pretty," pursued Mrs. Carleton; "is not her brother coming shortly?"

"Yes, I think so; he always comes down to shoot with my brothers."

"He is such a favorite of Edmund's—I hardly know why, for Edmund does not care much for young men, generally; and he has not seen so very much of Mr. Constable—but he thinks him very clever."

"Do you like him yourself?"

"Pretty well; I cannot always tell what he means, and he is too liberal in his opinions for me."

"I did not know you cared for politics."

"I don't mean politically—but he takes up people one fancies better let alone, and stands up sometimes too much for those

who are in the wrong. Edmund says he offends my prejudices."

Beatrice Clyde, when she was introduced to Mrs. Carleton, accepted her invitation without demur; she belonged to the Wynthorpe House party, and felt that she must follow their movements. She was not sorry when she found that Captain Denbigh was one of the invited; and as Mr. Carleton's house was near, and every one walked there, she did not think it necessary to interrupt her conversation with him, and they traversed the distance from the race-course to the town together.

Mr. Carleton was a banker in Railton; and as he and his wife were young, and fond of society, his house was a frequent gathering-place for out-of-town families like the Lytteltons, on occasions when any diversion was going on in the town. It was favourably situated; standing a little back from the road, which formed the principal en-

trance to Railton, and having a tolerable garden behind, sloping to the river, along which was borne pleasantly the chime of the cathedral bells—the grey walls of the cathedral itself being visible through the trees. The drawing-room opened upon the garden; and as the evening was mild, the entertainment assumed almost an *al fresco* character. Beatrice Clyde had a chair placed for her outside the French windows, and Captain Denbigh and Fred Lyttelton were her constant attendants. But not the only ones; she was so lively and brilliant, that she soon attracted others—amongst them, the master of the house, a man of sufficient talent to make a conversation with him a pleasure greater than Beatrice often enjoyed. Yet she did not let Captain Denbigh feel himself neglected—and even Fred was gratified by finding that she could laugh at his small wit.

"How jolly this is!" said Captain Den-

bigh, during a period when he was the only person near her chair; "I used to think Railton the most stupid place I ever was in, but now that one knows more people, it is improving—and getting up these races was a grand idea! I wish we could have them every day, or something like them! I do believe these Railton people only want to have things proposed to them, to enter into amusement as heartily as anyone. Would it not be glorious to effect a transformation amongst them?—to turn this dull, cramped, cathedral society into a go-a-head, dashing one? Suppose you and I, Miss Clyde, set to work to change it—I am sure we could manage it together."

"I don't think I should do my part," said Beatrice; "I am not so very fond of society as you seem to think."

"Oh, I don't mean to say you cannot do without it, and I am not so absolutely dependent upon it myself as to want it con-

tinually. I could live in a desert with books and drawing materials, but when one is obliged to herd with one's kind—messing night after night with the same set of fellows — however good they may be, one does long for something else — women's society, in short. And that one can't have, at least in a place like this, without dances or theatres, or rows of some sort. Morning calls are no go in this place—I'm sure I've tried them long enough, with no result. A mamma and three daughters seated in conclave, letting fall some sentences in turns, about the Dean's last sermon, or Mr. Somebody's new house, or the failure of the fruit crop—no chance of a *tête-à-tête* of any sort, or even a bit of badinage. The mammas always mount guard in Railton, I find; but no doubt the girls are glad enough of a little pleasure. If we could get up a ball, I dare-say they would all go. Wouldn't it be fine to have a Race Ball? "

"Yes, capital!" said Beatrice.

"You would come?"

"Of course; I am determined to get as much amusement out of life as I can."

There was a hardness in her tone, which did not suit the words, but Captain Denbigh did not notice it.

"Bravo! then we *will* have one. I see how it can be managed—only I must get Curzon, and Brookes, and a few more into it. You know we have another day yet—day after to-morrow; and there is the Ladies' Plate, not yet filled up. I will go in for it, and persuade the other fellows, with the understanding that the winner spends the prize in giving a ball—don't you think it a glorious scheme?"

"Yes, excellent!—if you can carry it through."

"Oh, I don't doubt that. We have plenty of dancing men, and they are sure to enter for the Ladies' Plate."

"Yet it has remained unfilled up till now—you must have made an injudicious choice of a name."

"Oh, it was an after-thought, that was the reason—it will be filled quickly enough now, never fear. Halloo, Curzon! I want to speak to you."

Mr. Curzon did not hear, and the impulsive young man darted after him and Jessie Lyttelton. Beatrice smiled half-sadly at his eagerness, but turned almost immediately to reply gaily to a question of Mr. Carleton's.

The subject of the Ladies' Plate was soon under discussion throughout the whole circle, and Captain Denbigh's enthusiasm seemed contagious. All the girls present declared themselves dying for a dance, and Mr. Carleton offered his wife as chaperon to any number of them.

No other subject of conversation was introduced during the evening, and everyone

was talking at once, except two or three young ladies, who were sunk in silent meditation about their dresses. No one enquired who had inspired Captain Denbigh with the great idea; only, Dora Lyttelton said once, apart to Mrs. Carleton,

"Do look at Miss Clyde! how superbly indifferent she seems just now, yet I feel sure she is at the bottom of the whole affair —I daresay mamma will have to chaperon her."

"Mr. Carleton was asking me to offer, but I should think it would be better for her to go with your party, so I shall say nothing about it."

CHAPTER V.

A QUEEN OF HEARTS.

THE following morning an invitation to Mr. and Miss Clyde, from the winner of the Ladies' Plate, to an evening party on the last day of the races, showed that Captain Denbigh had gained his point. Who was to be the actual giver of the entertainment, remained, of course, in uncertainty until the winning of the race.

"Well, Beatrice," said Mr. Clyde, after his daughter had given the note into his hands, "and do you wish to go?"

"I almost promised I would, papa, and I

did not imagine you would have any objection."

"Only that I know very little of these officers, who, I suppose, have got up the affair, and it seems to me a foolish way of having a ball. If they had started a subscription ball, I would have joined in it for you with pleasure."

"But this is not a regular ball, papa; don't you see, it is called an evening party, and it is not to include all Railton—only the set who attended the races. A subscription ball would require far more time and fuss, and is a sort of thing which cannot, I believe, be managed in Railton."

"I would much rather it had been a regular ball," said Mr. Clyde; "if this is a sort of private party, it involves more future intimacy with these officers than I should altogether like."

"Dear papa, don't trouble yourself on that score," said Beatrice, lightly, "I will

do all the entertaining part. Come, you must not refuse your consent; I have set my heart on going to this affair."

"It is new for you to be so eager about pleasure, Beatrice."

"Is it? Well, I have tried doing without it long enough. I must have a change. Papa, surely you cannot refuse me any little enjoyment that may make my life tolerable; you know there is little enough in store for me."

"Beatrice!" Mr. Clyde's tone was pleading, and a look of pain passed across his face, and contracted his high, polished, somewhat receding brow. Beatrice's manner altered suddenly; she went up to her father, kissed him, and said, in a half-fondling, half-coaxing tone,

"Dear papa, don't mind my words. Only be good, and let me have my little pleasure."

"You always have your way, child," and

Mr. Clyde half-playfully pushed her from him; "go and write what you like. But don't ask me to go with you."

"Mrs. Lyttelton will chaperon me," said Beatrice; "thanks, dear papa," and she glided quickly from the room.

An hour or two later she was seated in the breakfast-room at the Laurels, using all her eloquence to persuade Mrs. Constable that Amy was not too young to go to the ball, and that Mrs. Lyttelton would be delighted to take her.

Amy was intensely anxious to go, and intensely devoted to Beatrice for wishing her to go. Between the two, Mrs. Constable's opposition was vanquished.

"I only wish Lionel were at home," said Amy, when consent had been gained; "I know he would have enjoyed this ball, and I am sure he would have liked dancing with you, Miss Clyde; and you know, this is your ball—at least, we all consider it so."

"You all consider it so! I am sure I don't know why you should. I have nothing to do with it."

"Well, everyone says Captain Denbigh proposed it, and that he never would have proposed it but for you."

"I assure you, I never suggested anything of the kind."

"Amy, you should not say such things," said Mrs. Constable; "Miss Clyde will not like them. You young girls are always imagining everything must have some absurd cause, quite wide of the mark, generally. Captain Denbigh no doubt meant to please Miss Clyde as well as the other young ladies. She would not wish him to give a ball on her account alone, I am sure."

"I don't care who gives the ball, or why it is given, provided I go," said Beatrice, "and I dare say one dance will give rise to another, and we shall go on now till Christ-

mas. Really, this place would be very dull without some intervals of gaiety."

"You have been accustomed, perhaps, to a gay life, my dear?" said Mrs. Constable.

"No, I have not; but near London one can always find excitements, by going up to hear music, see paintings, and so on. I suppose I miss them now, and so am ready to throw myself into what I can get."

"I did not suppose you were a person to live on excitement."

"Did you not? Well, I did not think so myself till lately. Perhaps the fury will wear itself out, and I shall settle down as peaceful and contented as you, Mrs. Constable. Oh, dear, I do envy you!" Beatrice threw herself on a low stool at Mrs. Constable's feet as she spoke, and took up the end of a piece of knitting that was on the table. "If I could absorb myself in a piece of work like this, or take a warm interest in the fate of Simon Johnson's sick

cow—it *was* a cow, was it not?—how delightful it must be!"

"My life was not always so peaceful as it now seems, nor are my thoughts always so easily employed," said Mrs. Constable; "but I cannot wish you any harm in wishing that, after the storms of your life are over, you may feel as calm as I do. But you should not wish it yet; with the storms you will have, no doubt, delicious joys, beyond any that I can ever have again."

"Shall I?" said Beatrice; "are there not some whose lives are all storm—or all gloom, which is worse? Perhaps mine may be one of them. Not that I feel at all doleful at present," she added, springing up, and with a sudden change of manner, "I am inclined to seize all the pleasure I can; for, 'Ah! it is not always May!'"

She ran to the piano and sang the whole of the song, which was a favourite with her, then apologized to Mrs. Constable for inflict-

ing it upon her; and being assured that the infliction was most agreeable, she went on singing song after song, mostly of a wildly-joyous nature, half the morning, until at length Amy enticed her away up-stairs, to give an opinion upon the all-important subject of her dress.

Beatrice was quite at home at the Laurels now, and frequently spent an hour or two with Amy and her mother. She was always welcome, for her somewhat uncertain spirits and variable manner only increased the interest she had awakened in their minds. Mrs. Constable often saw something to condemn, but could always be won by the charm of Beatrice's manner, when she chose to exert it; and Amy, though not daring to look upon Miss Clyde as a friend, could scarcely, in her humble adoration, find a fault in her.

The races the following day were more brilliantly attended than they had been on

the preceding one. The Ladies' Plate gave additional excitement to the proceedings, and the bets in gloves rose to a considerable number. Beatrice, greatly to Captain Denbigh's delight, backed him again, and many others followed her example, out of gratitude to him for his suggestion about the ball. He was of course more eager and excited than ever, but his experience had taught him some wisdom, for he rode much better than on the day before. He won the prize, and there were few who grudged it to him.

"Denbigh ought to die now," whispered Colonel Morley to Mrs. Carleton, who was near him, as the winner, flushed with pleasure and gratified vanity, made his way up to Beatrice. "This is the proudest moment of his life: he has won the Ladies' Plate, just the kind of plate he would care to win; and he knows Miss Clyde backed him, and that he has not disappointed her. Above

all, he will give the ball to-night, which, whatever people may say, is entirely in her honour; and he feels a right to ask her for an almost unlimited number of dances. At this moment he is asking her, I have no doubt, for three waltzes, two galops, and a polka."

"Do you really think the ball is on her account?" said Mrs. Carleton; "I am sure she ought not to have allowed such a thing."

"My dear Mrs. Carleton, where is the harm? Miss Clyde likes a dance, probably, and if she can urge on a young spooney to get one up, what does it signify? She goes, gives him as many dances as she thinks fit, and there is an end of the matter. If he expects anything more, it is his own fault."

"Well, I certainly do consider her manner with Captain Denbigh very flirting, though Mr. Carleton declares there is no-

thing in it. I saw her to-day, when Captain Denbigh first came on the grand-stand, give him her hand over her shoulder. I call that very flirting, unless done to an intimate friend."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Well, don't you see—instead of turning round to shake hands with him, as he could not get in front of her, she held her hand over her shoulder, and let him shake it in that way. I call such a thing very familiar; but perhaps you do not understand —at least you pretend not."

"I should in a moment, if you would give me an illustration."

"Now, Colonel Morley, don't be so ridiculous; I will never tell you anything again, if you go on so. Do you know where Edmund is?"

"No; but I will look for him if you wish it. Oh! there he is, just coming up to speak to Miss Clyde—congratulating her on her

winnings, I am positive, from Denbigh's expression. Poor fellow! his happy look at being in some sort allied to Miss Clyde, makes one feel half melancholy. Well, shall I tell Mr. Carleton you want him?"

"Oh, no; he will come presently, I daresay," said Mrs. Carleton, rising. "I should like to walk to the other end, Colonel Morley, if you will take me; I think I see Mrs. Kendall."

The opinion that the ball movement had originated with Miss Clyde, was almost universal, and when she entered the Assembly Rooms in the evening no one was surprised to see her immediately seized upon by Captain Denbigh, and, in fact, appropriated by him for the greater part of the night. That she was the belle of the room was undoubted, although perhaps one or two of more beauty were present. She was looking her best, and her spirits were at their highest.

She danced, and talked, and laughed, and though too well-bred to be noisy, there was certainly in her demeanour something which fastidious observers would have pronounced too vivacious. She could not have been called "fast," but she was not exactly quiet enough for the ideal of an English lady.

The gentlemen were unanimous in her praise; those of her own sex were more guarded. Mrs. Lyttelton, kind as she was, was induced to say, when cross-questioned by Mrs. Carleton, that she should not quite like to see Helen or Dora imitate Miss Clyde. As for Jessie, she was giddy enough without any encouragement or example, but in such a mere girl giddiness was more tolerable. Mrs. Carleton, though condemning Beatrice with anyone who would listen to her, or join in her opinions, was very gracious indeed to herself; she invited her to spend a day at Railton shortly, and offered to make up a party to explore the Cathedral thoroughly,

and to see the view from the top. Beatrice, however, suspected the latter suggestion to have originated with Mr. Carleton, as he, during a quadrille they had sat out together, had been praising the said view, and wishing to hear her impressions of it. She accepted the invitation—it was her present impulse to go everywhere, to see everything, to know everybody—and she accompanied her acceptance with such charming smiles, entered so sweetly into small-talk with Mrs. Carleton, that she could not fail to remove, in some degree, the bad impression she had previously given.

The ball came to an end, and Beatrice went home, with full food for her vanity, if she chose to indulge it. Probably she was, in some measure, gratified with the sensation she had caused, for she gave a rapturous account of her amusements to her mother, the next morning, and showed an extreme avidity to enter into every scheme

of pleasure that was proposed in the neighbourhood.

And the impetus having been once given, entertainments of one kind or other followed in quick succession. In all, Beatrice took a prominent part; into whatever went on — dancing, games, conversation, — she threw herself with an ardour that made people think her the most impulsive and excitable of mortals; and through all, carried on her flirtation with Captain Denbigh to such a degree that she shocked even more charitable beholders than Mrs. Carleton and Dora Lyttelton. And withal she spared sufficient attention for Fred Lyttelton, and the rest of her male acquaintances, to ally them all on her side; so that, before two months were over, she was in the not very enviable situation of being admired and popular amongst all the men around her, yet shunned and disliked by most of the women.

CHAPTER VI.

"EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS."

THE autumn was rapidly closing into winter, when Lionel Constable arrived at his mother's house; he had not been able to come so early as had been expected, greatly to the disgust of the Lytteltons, who declared, father and sons, that the best of the shooting was over; but Lionel, with his hearty, genial nature, regretted nothing, so long as he found himself again amongst his old friends A few days after his arrival, he went over to Railton to see the Carletons; and on entering the house, was ushered into a room, where he found

himself face to face with a young lady in a riding habit, whom he had never seen before. He was not long in deciding, that she must be the Miss Clyde of whom he had already heard volumes, from his mother and Amy; and he had scarcely had time to observe her face and figure, when Mrs. Carleton entered, and he was made aware that he had guessed rightly.

Mrs. Carleton had a book in her hand, which she gave to Beatrice, saying,

"I can only find this volume now; I never can understand where Edmund puts his books, but he will be sure to send you the others as soon as he knows you want them."

"Is not your husband at home?" asked Mr. Constable.

"He has gone out shooting, but he will be back before dinner; and of course you will stay," said Mrs. Carleton, speaking to Lionel with some cordiality.

He did not refuse, for he and Mr. Carleton were intimate friends, and he had come with an idea of remaining the whole day.

"We have been very gay lately," resumed Mrs. Carleton—"quite a change in our quiet neighbourhood!"

"So I hear; have I come too late for the gaiety?"

"You must ask Miss Clyde; she is the authority in such matters, I heard the other day."

A slight tinge of colour flushed Beatrice's cheek as she said,

"I don't know more than other people, but as I join in any amusement that is ever planned, I suppose I have gained the reputation of being an authority. I can only say that I hope Mr. Constable is not too late, for I should be very sorry if we were to sink into dulness at this time of year."

"Ah! you are so untiring," said Mrs.

Carleton; "I daresay if I had your strength and spirits, I should enjoy myself too, but I get so tired—I have told Edmund I will not go to any more parties, he may go by himself if he likes."

"Oh, Mrs. Carleton, but you will come to the charades at Wynthorpe House. Mr. Carleton half-promised you would act."

"I shall certainly not do that, my dear Miss Clyde; I should never screw up my courage to it. People ought to have a great deal of confidence to act; but I should like to see you all, very much."

"Acting does not require so much courage as you may fancy," said Beatrice. "They are only charades, you know; and we are all inexperienced actors, so you would be like the rest."

"I thought Captain Denbigh was a famous performer."

"He has acted before, I believe; but I am rather like Colonel Morley, not inclined to

put much faith in what he can do, before I have seen him."

"And when are these charades to take place?" asked Lionel.

"Has not your sister told you yet? I thought she was so imbued with the acting spirit, she could talk of nothing else."

"I have heard something certainly; but I don't know the exact day."

"And I have forgotten it; but you will soon know, no doubt, and receive an invitation and play-bill in due form—unless, indeed, you are first asked to act, which is not improbable."

"Are not all the parts filled up?"

"No; in one of the charades we have a —oh! I forgot; I must not betray anything to the uninitiated. You will be sure to hear in time, if you are wanted."

"Mr. Clyde is at the door, and wishes to know if Miss Clyde is ready," said a servant entering the room.

Beatrice rose at once, and hurriedly took leave of Mrs. Carleton, turning to bow to Lionel; but he left the room with her, saying,

"I suppose your horse is waiting," and conducted her to the door. Outside they found Mr. Clyde on horseback, and a groom holding Miss Clyde's horse.

Lionel helped her to mount, was rewarded with a gracious smile and a merry good-bye, and then saw the father and daughter ride off together. Not being inclined for a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Carleton, he announced to her that he had some business in the town, and should stroll about; and thus he whiled away the hours, till it was nearly time to expect Mr. Carleton from shooting. The meeting between the two gentlemen was very cordial; they had many tastes and opinions in common, and their conversation throughout dinner, and the time they were alone together after-

wards, never flagged, or needed the stimulus of local gossip.

But when they joined Mrs. Carleton, she, as if to indemnify herself for her forbearance at dinner, in not interrupting them on subjects which were out of her line, contrived to draw Mr. Constable into a flood of reminiscences, and then to give him a variety of information about the doings of his acquaintances in the Railton neighbourhood since he had seen them.

"Edmund, Mr. Constable saw your favourite, Miss Clyde, this morning; she came for some books you had promised her, but I could only find one of them."

"Ah! what do you think of her, Lionel?"

"She is a handsome girl, and looks as if she had a good deal in her; I had heard a full report of her before, and had no difficulty in guessing who she was."

"You heard she was an atrocious flirt, I suppose," said Mrs. Carleton; "I am glad

your mother sees that at last. She and Amy were quite fascinated by Miss Clyde."

"I did not hear anything so very bad of her; only that she and Captain Denbigh were a good deal together. I suppose that is symptomatic of matrimony — nothing worse."

"No, no!" said Mr. Carleton, decidedly; "Miss Clyde will never throw herself away on Denbigh, though he is a nice, gentlemanly fellow."

"There now! and yet you stand up for Miss Clyde," said Mrs. Carleton, in a half-triumphant tone. "You don't think she means to have the man—you know how she goes on—and yet you persist in saying she is no flirt! I say she is a most dangerous woman, inveigling young men, till they—"

"Break their hearts? No, no, Denbigh will be no worse for having liked her, if he

does like her—and probably he does not think more seriously than she does."

"Only fancy, Mr. Constable — riding together constantly as they do! I wonder Mr. Clyde allows it. What would you say if your sister were to do so?"

"Is it anybody's business if a gentleman should choose
To ride with a lady, and the lady don't refuse?"

"What absurd lines are you quoting? I'm sure I don't believe in them!"

"Instead of being absurd, they are most wise, I think; I wish I could remember the whole, but if I can find them I will send them to you: they are on 'Everybody's Business.'"

"You had better send them to Miss Clyde; she would be more likely to appreciate them. I see you are going to be just as bad as the rest—quite wrapped up in her."

"I have not had the opportunity, you

know, of seeing her flirting propensities; till I have, I cannot condemn her."

"But Edmund does see, and yet stands up for her."

"No, not quite," said Mr. Carleton; "I only mean to say that she is not a systematic flirt, or a heartless one; she has wild spirits at times, which carry her beyond what you women think correct, and she says and does things which you would be afraid to think—but she is as pure, high-hearted a woman as breathes in this world—I would stake my life upon it."

"Really, you fly off into such raptures, there is no understanding you—do, Mr. Constable, find another subject of conversation. I am quite sick of Miss Clyde and her doings. You are tolerably sensible as yet."

"I suppose I shall fall under the glamour presently, so I may as well talk of something else whilst I have the power."

"If you do fall under it, you will never cast it off," said Mr. Carleton; "you are not like poor Denbigh, who will doubtless find another Miss Clyde at his next country quarters."

"The conversation is growing personal," said Lionel. "What do you say, Mrs. Carleton, to a game at backgammon, as a little relief? You used to beat me famously, I know."

When Lionel Constable returned home that evening, he found his sister full of information about the projected charades. The Lytteltons had been over during the day, with a request that Lionel would take a vacant part; and little Amy, anxious to draw him into the vortex of acting in which the youths and maidens of Wynthorpe were whirling, had almost promised his consent.

Lionel was nothing loth; he was fond of society in nearly any form, and liked any-

thing which had a tendency to draw people together. He was not superior either to the fascination which an exercise of the power of acting possesses for most persons; and after one or two meetings at Wynthorpe House, he became almost as earnest over the business as Captain Denbigh himself.

Beatrice Clyde was, of course, an important person in all the consultations that went forward. The Lytteltons, with meek humility, gave way to her and Captain Denbigh in most things, not, however, without an occasional sneer on the part of Dora. Lionel soon found himself watching Miss Clyde's behaviour, and becoming puzzled thereby; the observations of the Carletons had roused his curiosity, and he was, besides, an admirer of pretty women, and anxious to think well of them when it was possible.

One evening, when the noise and laughter had been greater that usual, Beatrice,

with an appearance of extreme weariness, withdrew somewhat from the general circle, and suffered several important discussions to go on, without offering a single suggestion. She was sitting at one end of the long, empty room, which was the scene of the rehearsals, and was to be that of the future performance, when Lionel Constable walked up to her, and, finding that Captain Denbigh was fully engrossed with some consultation about his own costume, endeavoured to engage her in conversation.

He had never yet had a *tête-à-tête* with her, and he was rather anxious to try the experiment. He could not help observing that, as he approached, Beatrice crushed between her fingers a piece of paper, and then thrust it into the pocket of her dress. That it was no fragment of stage directions or description of costume—such bits of paper were flying about continually, so it might have been something of the kind—was evi-

dent to him from the strange expression of her eyes as she raised them to him.

They had a wild, defiant glance, changing instantly into a frightened look, as of some hunted animal run to bay. But she did not seem displeased when she saw who approached.

Lionel sat down on the bench near her, but did not speak immediately. When he did he merely gave utterance to a commonplace observation.

"What a Babel it is! Surely of all things that ever were invented for making people show their characters, amateur acting is the best."

"Do you think so?" said Beatrice, rather absently.

"Yes; I am sure I feel that I have been displaying all my little vanities in the most egregious manner—and as for Carleton, I never knew before that he was vain of his legs: and now I see he must be, for nothing

else could have induced him to appear in the character of Jeames de la Pluche. He has not an idea what to say in the situation, and owned to me as much. And as for Denbigh and the rest—but doubtless you have observed for yourself?"

"And are we women exempt from these weaknesses?"

"You! I dare not pretend to dissect all your motives; it is enough that you choose certain parts. We quite submit to your judgment—you know, of course, intuitively in which you appear to most advantage."

"What a great deal of trouble we give ourselves!" said Beatrice, rather following the course of her own thoughts than answering Mr. Constable's observation; "and yet when it is over I daresay I shall be sorry, and wish for something else."

"Such is life!" said Lionel, with mock-tragic air.

"Not to everyone, I trust," said Beatrice,

with more earnestness than she had hitherto shown; "men who have work to do in the world, and who can carve out a fate for themselves, need not be dependent upon paltry excitements for the interest of their lives."

"But who can carve out a fate for himself? The most a man can do is to bend his fate to his will, and women can do that as well as men. But what folly it is to talk about fate at all! I am sure you do not believe in such a thing. We bring ourselves into difficulties through our own faults, rashness, or stupidity, and then we blame fate. It is true, when once we have brought ourselves into difficult circumstances, it is almost impossible to escape from them. *Then* we can only conform ourselves to them as best we may."

"Fate or circumstance! Call it what you please, it does not alter the hardness, the bitterness of the position," said Beatrice,

rising as she spoke, and moving towards the window, near which she was sitting.

There were no shutters, and she looked out into the dark night; her hands were firmly clenched, and one of her feet beat a rapid tattoo on the ground. It appeared as if some physical exertion were absolutely necessary to prevent her inner excitement breaking forth in wild words.

Lionel Constable looked at her in wonder; he had not believed that anything in the few sentences they had exchanged could have produced such agitation—and that Beatrice was agitated, was manifest. The voice of Captain Denbigh, who was coming towards the end of the room, calling out,

"Miss Clyde! Miss Clyde! we cannot do without you!" only added to her excitement.

"I cannot! I cannot!" she exclaimed, turning to Lionel. "Say I am tired—ill—

anything!" And, opening a side-door, she glided from the room.

Lionel, appealed to in such a manner, was not likely to fail her, and rapidly concocted some excuse, which satisfied Captain Denbigh for the moment. He was too much occupied with the business in hand to interrupt it by anxieties even for Beatrice, and he returned to the group he had left.

Lionel remained near the window, wondering whether Beatrice intended to return. The room they were in was partly detached from the house—at least it was only connected with it by a covered passage. The door by which Beatrice had gone out, led, not into this passage, but into a sort of lumber-room, which opened upon a side-court leading into the grounds. There was no way of reaching the main part of the house except by making a considerable circuit, and it was not likely that, on a cold

night, and thinly clad, Miss Clyde would choose to go into the open air. Still some time passed and she did not return, and Lionel, fancying that she might be really ill, resolved, at the risk of seeming impertinent, to go in search of her. She was not in the lumber-room when he entered it, and a cold blast of air made him aware that the outer door was open.

"What a strange creature she is!" he said to himself; "what a freak, to rush out on a cold night like this! However, as I have come so far, I will see what has become of her." And he went to the door and looked out.

It was starlight, and had she been within a moderate distance he would have been able to see her. But she was not visible; and concluding, he knew not why, that she had not gone into the house—instead of turning in that direction he went through the gate which led into the grounds. He

entered a long path between rows of beech trees, and had not gone far before he became aware that a light figure was pacing to and fro along the distant part of the walk. Half angry at her folly, half interested in her behaviour, he hastened his steps until he came up with Beatrice.

"Why have you followed me, Mr. Constable?" she said, proudly, as soon as she became conscious of his presence.

"Only because I am afraid you have forgotten what a cold night it is. It is really enough to freeze you. Do come in—not to the theatre, if you are tired, but into the house."

"I cannot come yet; pray go back—and if you mean to be kind, do not let me be missed."

"I am afraid I cannot help that," said Lionel, with involuntary flattery in his tone.

Beatrice gave a gesture of extreme impatience, and he saw it.

"Pardon me, Miss Clyde, I meant no empty nonsense; and do seriously believe that I have only sought you for your good. I see—I cannot help seeing that something has disturbed you. I have no wish to inquire what it is—I only——"

"I must have freedom," interrupted Beatrice, impatiently; "it is very hard that, after spending the hours I have done this evening in folly and merriment I am not in the mood for, I may not have a few quiet moments to myself."

"Have them by all means, but go home first. Don't brave this raw air in that thin dress."

"I don't feel it—at least, what I feel I like; only the wind is not half stormy enough for me to-night."

She dashed from him, and walked at her utmost speed to the end of the path, and then back again. Lionel stood still and let her pass him several times. He felt that

the storm within her must have its way. He half smiled to himself at the chance which had made him a witness to this singular mood. Was she subject to such? And what caused them? Deep internal grief, unrestrained temper, or incipient madness?

He experienced a sensation of satisfaction in the consciousness that it was himself, and not one of the shallow youths who fluttered round her—the cynical Colonel Morley, or even her advocate, Mr. Carleton—who had seen her agitation.

Without arrogating any superiority to himself, Lionel Constable knew that with him what he saw and what he guessed would remain sacred, and he did not know, he could not be sure, how it might have been with others.

At length the wild walk ended, and Beatrice stopped close to Lionel, saying in a tone to which the womanly gentleness had

returned, and which sounded, from the force of contrast, especially winning,

"You are good to wait for me, Mr. Constable, and to bear with my rudeness. Do not think I am usually so excitable and strange; but it is my peculiarity when anything annoys me to vent my feelings in violent exercise, and I am irritable when interrupted. I suppose it springs from something savage in my nature, and I know it is wrong to be so ungoverned. I feel bitterly humiliated that you have seen me."

She stopped abruptly, and gave a shiver as she ceased speaking. Lionel immediately placed her arm within his, and almost dragged her on towards the house. The reaction of excitement made her now acutely sensitive to the keen wind, and she half clung to him in her shuddering. He soothed her gently as he might have done a child, and wrapped closely round her the thin mantle which had fallen from her shoulders.

Laughing at herself for her folly, entreating him to have mercy upon her, and not drag her on so fast, she suffered him to lead her to the house.

The door of one of the rooms opening into the hall was ajar, displaying within a blazing fire, and into this room Lionel, without pausing to think, conducted Beatrice. It was a small study, untenanted at present, though an arm-chair by the fire, and a newspaper on the table, seemed to indicate that some one had only lately quitted it. Beatrice threw herself into the arm-chair, which Lionel wheeled yet closer to the fire, and began to warm her chilled feet and hands. As she did so, the oddity of the situation suddenly struck her, and she looked up at Lionel, somewhat inclined to laugh. But the sight of his face, as he stood, gravely regarding her, leaning against the mantel-piece, changed her sense of the ludicrous into one of shame, at having be-

trayed so much emotion before him; and she remained, for a moment or two, incapable of speech. For the first time, she noticed minutely, though almost unconsciously, Lionel's personal appearance; and the conviction that he was a young and handsome man forced itself, rather unpleasantly, upon her; had he been a grim old bachelor, or a stout, comfortable Pater Familias, she could better have borne the knowledge that he had seen her under the dominion of resistless passion.

Lionel Constable was very tall; certainly not less than six feet two, and his frame was strong in proportion. His head rose nobly above a neck that, firm and well-defined, sprang freely from his shoulders. A profusion of short, crisp, light-chestnut curls covered the magnificently-formed head, and marked the outline of a broad but not high forehead. The nose, and general contour of the face, were of Grecian

type, and the turn of the whiskerless cheeks perfectly classic. But there was none of that severity apparent which frequently accompanies features of this class; an air of geniality and enjoyment was unmistakeable about the mouth, which, though *mobile* in expression, seemed incapable of anything like harshness or coldness; yet the decision stamped upon the upper part of the face prevented the geniality from ever degenerating into softness, the enjoyment into coarseness.

The eyes, of a light, clear blue, were gifted with great variety of expression, from that of the gravest thought to that of the most frolicsome merriment. Gleams of sweet tenderness, also, were not unknown to them, though, from the general character of the face, they would hardly have been expected.

The fair complexion, and the absence of whisker, gave an appearance of greater

youth than Lionel possessed; for he had in reality reached the maturity of thirty years.

"Mr. Constable," said Beatrice, after a long interval of silence, "I am afraid you are completely shocked with me; you have not spoken one word to me since we came in."

"I have not spoken, because I thought the quieter you were the better. And I do not know why I should be shocked. I was sorry to see that something had disturbed you, or made you unhappy, and I thought that the fire-side was a better place for you than the beech avenue. My thoughts about you did not extend further; at least, if they did, they were checked—and such as they were, they could not have offended you."

"Then you conclude, I suppose, that I have met with some sudden cause of grief; and if my life goes on as usual, you will be puzzled?"

"It will not be my business to make con-

jectures, as to what has grieved you; but even if I do make them, it does not follow that they will be of the kind you imagine. I have not lived thirty years in the world, without knowing that associations, or a few chance words, even a sudden remembrance, may call up storms of passionate feeling quite as strong as a new, present sorrow can rouse. I am content to believe that your disturbance was so caused."

"Thank you," said Beatrice; "I will try not to regret that you have seen me for once without the conventional veil in which we all delight to wrap ourselves. Still, it is rather hard for me—I have so prided myself on making my face a mere mask."

"It is a pity to pride yourself on such a thing as that. There is no charm in what is motionless and impassive; at least, only the statuesque charm, which is not worth much, in my opinion."

"I was not thinking of the charm," said Beatrice; "I was only thinking of the comfort it would be to hide oneself from all human observation. Scrutiny is seldom less than painful."

"Then what would become of sympathy? I thought all women liked that!"

"Is there such a thing in the world?" said Beatrice, bitterly; "or rather, are there not situations in which sympathy is impossible, or, if given, unavailing?"

"Unavailing to cure sorrow entirely, perhaps, or even partially: but surely anything is better than the loneliness of remaining shut up in one's own identity, unknown to any one human creature. And, Miss Clyde, I must say this, you are not a person to shut yourself out from all sympathy; harden your face into what mask you will, you will never succeed in persuading the world that you are free from changeful emotions."

"I did not think you would turn

my speech into an excuse for making personal observations," said Beatrice, haughtily.

"I am sorry for having done so. I am in the habit of speaking too much as I think, and those who know me well excuse me. I had forgotten that our acquaintance was of short standing. Let us talk of something more general."

"It is time for me to join the others," said Beatrice, rising.

"Stay a moment longer; you are not fit to go yet. I saw you shiver just now," said Lionel.

Beatrice sat down again; she was really shivering and trembling, so that she could scarcely stand. Lionel left her for an instant, and returned with a large plaid, in which he wrapped her. She was so chilled, either from the exposure to the cutting wind, or the re-action of feverish excitement, that the extra warmth was wel-

come, and she resigned herself without further opposition to his cares for her.

"Shall I go for Mrs. Lyttelton?" said Lionel, at length; "I begin to be afraid you have caught cold, and you may require more experienced treatment than mine."

"Oh, no, no; pray do not! I shall be ready to go directly. I would rather not let any one know how foolish I have been. I wonder no one has come into the room all this time."

"Mr. Lyttelton had just left it, I fancy, when we came; most likely he is in the drawing-room now, with his wife, and the others who are not rehearsing."

"What will they think has become of us?" said Beatrice, starting up; "do go to them, Mr. Constable. Say I am tired, and going home. I will find my way to the drawing-room, and say good night to Mrs. Lyttelton."

"You look rather too much like a ghost to show yourself to her yet. Forgive me,

I must make this one personal observation."

"But do you go back to the others?"

"Presently; I must see you more like yourself first;" and Lionel persisted in staying, and drew Beatrice into a conversation, which diverted her attention from her own thoughts.

He could not help being, as she had been, a little amused at the situation, and at the idea of the astonishment that would be roused if anyone were to come into the room, and find them together; but he had no desire to shorten the period of their remaining there.

Beatrice interested him; and there alternated with her defiant manner an occasional reliance upon his protection, and a confidence in him, that were inexpressibly charming to a man of his nature; that would, indeed, have probably been charming to any man. At length, however, seeing that her

appearance bore no traces of anything unusual having occurred to her, he acceded to her wish to conclude the interview; and left her, to give the best account he could, to the acting community, of his movements and hers.

Beatrice lingered in the room a minute or two after he quitted it, trying to collect her thoughts. Then she repaired to the drawing-room, where she found Mr. and Mrs. Lyttelton, and Mrs. Carleton, who, with her husband, was staying in the house for a few days.

They were all sitting near the fire, with their backs to the door, and no one saw Beatrice, till Mrs. Carleton, turning round for an instant, caught sight of her.

"Dear me, Miss Clyde! you almost frightened me; is anything the matter with the theatricals?"

"No, nothing; only I am tired, and wish to go home, if Mrs. Lyttelton will allow

me," said Beatrice, advancing into the room with her most dignified air.

"Of course, my dear, if you wish it. The carriage shall be ordered immediately. Harry, will you ring the bell? Come and sit by the fire, my dear; you are looking tired, certainly."

"It is the first time I ever heard of Miss Clyde's being tired," remarked Mrs. Carleton; "it is to be hoped the weariness will be worn off before to-morrow night, or I don't know what will become of the charades."

"Trust me," said Beatrice, lightly, "I shall be quite ready for action to-morrow evening."

"I am sure it is no wonder you *are* tired," said Mrs. Lyttelton, sympathisingly; "no doubt you had one of your long rides this morning, and then all the worry of the dresses and the parts. I am sure, I often wonder my girls are not worn to death."

"Some people take things so much more

quietly than others," said Mrs. Carleton; "there is Miss Dora, for instance, she always seems to me to get through so much, without taking any trouble."

"You fancy so! Well, I think Dora does less than any of the others, and yet is always complaining of weariness. No, no; Dora is a good girl in many ways, but she is quite one of those people who manage to get what they want done by others."

Beatrice did not enter into any conversation, and in a few minutes the carriage was announced. She took leave, and Mr. Lyttelton accompanied her into the hall, where, to her surprise, she saw Mr. Constable.

"Mr. Lyttelton, don't come into the cold," he called out, "I will take care of Miss Clyde;" and Mr. Lyttelton, saying, "Well, well, the young ones must have their day," retreated into the background.

"I have been telling white lies in your

service, Miss Clyde," said Lionel, as he led Beatrice to the carriage; "at least, I have been telling half-truths. I said, I knew you were in the drawing-room with Mrs. Lyttelton, allowing the inference to be drawn that you had been there ever since you left the rehearsal. I said, also, you were tired, and going home. Captain Denbigh was just then in a fancy-dress, which must not be seen by the eyes of the uninitiated, or I think he would have rushed to the drawing-room to say good night."

"Thank you for managing so well," said Beatrice.

She spoke now in a clear, steady tone, and her whole manner was so composed that Lionel could scarcely believe she was the same being he had seen, half-maddened by passionate excitement, an hour before. He handed her into the carriage, bade her a cordial good night, and shook hands with

her, rather more warmly than was absolutely necessary; but he felt as if he and Beatrice Clyde had made a wonderful advance in intimacy during this evening.

CHAPTER VII.

"Sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh."

WYNTHORPE HOUSE was a scene of dire confusion the next day, but when evening arrived the arrangements for the charades were in excellent order. The room, which had been used for lumber, made, when cleared out, an admirable green-room; and from it an awning had been extended above the walk which led to the house, for the convenience of the performers, who could thus reach their dressing-rooms without passing through the theatre.

When Beatrice Clyde made her appear-

ance, she was quickly assailed with questions as to the cause of her sudden departure the night before, all which she answered with light carelessness; but when Mr. Constable, in the dress of a Spanish muleteer, drew near to shake hands with her, she was glad that the eccentricity of his costume gave her an excuse to laugh, and thus conceal the slight awkwardness she felt at meeting him.

The sight of the green-room was quite a new experience for Beatrice, and it led her, for a time, entirely out of her own peculiar thoughts and affairs. Colonel Morley, who had been appointed prompter and stage-director, was stalking about, with a pot of rouge in his hand, seizing upon the unrouged ones with merciless haste, desirous of exercising his artistic genius upon them; and distributing at intervals bits of paper, on which were written directions for acting and entering on the stage.

A group of girls were sitting on a sofa, sipping coffee, and revealing to each other their various degrees of nervousness, or criticising the different costumes. A few careless individuals were studying their parts at the last moment, feeling that they would require immense prompting in order to succeed at all; others, in full confidence of their own powers, were marching about, spouting their speeches to anyone who would listen to them. Occasionally some half-frantic individual would rush in with his toilet only partially completed, declaring that some portion of it had been forgotten, or would not fit.

Captain Denbigh, who was to appear in the first charade as a French courtier of the time of Louis Quatorze, was perfectly radiant: thoroughly delighted with his dress and his part, and only regretting that Beatrice did not act in the same scene. Dora Lyttelton, who was to be

a coquettish Marquise, the object of his adoration, was not much to his taste; but Beatrice had insisted upon her taking the part, thinking that if she herself acted with Captain Denbigh in one love-scene, as she was to do in the last charade, she would have done quite enough in that line.

The orchestra, a portion of the 121st band, just began tuning up, when it was discovered that Dora's face was innocent of rouge, and an outcry was instantly made for Colonel Morley and his rouge-pot.

"I will not be rouged!" exclaimed Dora; "I am sure it is not necessary."

"You will look horrid, then," said Jessie; "you don't know how ghastly those foot-lights will make you."

"I don't care; I would rather be ghastly than wear rouge."

"Don't be silly, Dora."

"Everyone wears rouge."

"Look at Mr. Carleton's cheeks."

These remarks were uttered in different voices, and Colonel Morley declared, in a decisive tone, that it was time to go on, adding,

"If you don't consent, Miss Dora, I shall feel compelled to rouge you by force."

"I quite hate it—really, I don't see the good—" began Dora.

"I am sure I can understand you, dear," said Mrs. Carleton, who had been admitted behind the scenes, to assist in the preparations; "I am sure I don't think I could submit to such a thing myself. Still, you see other people don't mind—you must give way."

"Miss Clyde is not rouged any more than I am," said Dora.

"Because I am not dressed for my part," returned Beatrice; "but I have not the smallest objection to being rouged. Colonel Morley, you may rouge me as soon as you like."

Colonel Morley needed no further invitation, and immediately dabbed two red spots on Beatrice's cheeks. She retreated, however, before any delicate shading or tinting could be accomplished, saying,

"That will do for the present—I must be perfected afterwards. Now, Miss Dora, you can have no objection, I should think."

"I shall not let Colonel Morley be the artist," said Dora, with a shocked look. "Mrs. Carleton, if I must be rouged, I shall trust myself to you."

The business was finished at last, and then the bell rang; the performers took their places on the stage, and the curtain was raised.

Beatrice hurried away to dress for the second charade, in which she was to appear as a Spanish donna, and she only returned to the green-room in time to hear that the first performance had passed off with great *éclat*, and that Captain Denbigh, in particu-

lar, had distinguished himself. He came up to her for a moment, before she had to go on the stage, but he did not seem quite pleased with what he had done.

"I could make nothing of Miss Dora Lyttelton," he said; "she looked the part well enough—but I don't know how it was. I am looking forward to *our* charade as *the* one of the night."

Meanwhile, Dora's friends were crowding round her, full of praises.

"Oh, I am so glad it is over," said Dora, throwing herself into an arm-chair. "I assure you I did not know how I felt. Oh, Miss Clyde!—so you are going on now! How cool you look!—I wish I were like you."

"I don't think she minds anything," said Mrs. Carleton, when Beatrice had gone; "I never saw so much confidence in any girl in my life."

"She knows she cannot fail," said Amy

Constable, with warmth; "people who are talented like her need not be nervous."

"Ah, but many people have talents who cannot show them," said Mrs. Carleton; "for instance, I am sure if I could sing as well as Miss Clyde I should never have the nerve to do it; and I have known people with superior voices to hers who could never sing in society."

"It is a happy thing when people are constituted like Miss Clyde," said Dora; "I don't think she cares in the least what is said of her."

"I think it would be as well if she cared more," said Mrs. Carleton; "did you see the way she allowed Colonel Morley to dab her face with rouge."

"Oh, do come to the side of the stage," interrupted Jessie; "Miss Clyde and Lionel Constable are acting so well."

Dora and Mrs. Carleton moved, and the discussion ceased.

The second charade was applauded even more than the first had been; but Beatrice had no time to stay and hear comments, as she had to dress for her part in the last charade, in which, unlike the others, the scenes were to be laid in English life of the present day.

The word was "Ringlet;" and in the first scene, Beatrice, a young lady living with her guardian — represented by Captain Brookes—was to receive clandestinely a ring from her lover, Captain Denbigh. All the performers acted well: Beatrice was coquettish and charming—the guardian cynical and antagonistic—Captain Denbigh dashing and devoted—and even Jeames de la Pluche (Mr. Carleton), an excellent mixture of conceit and facetiousness.

The second scene, "Let," was rather weak in structure, being concerning the letting of some lodgings, which the guardian wished to take in a country place, remote from the

lover; the only point being the manner in which he succumbed to the plausibility of the landlady.

The whole word was given in a scene in which Captain Denbigh discovered the guardian "mooning" over a small black ringlet, supposed to belong to the landlady, and, by threatening to expose his weakness to the world, succeeded in extorting his consent to the marriage of himself and Beatrice. Beatrice then rushed in, ready to add her powers of persuasion, and the curtain fell on a grand tableau of reconciliation.

Though the plot of this charade was of the slightest description, yet the acting of Beatrice and Captain Denbigh caused a brilliant success.

Lionel Constable, who was watching from the side of the stage, was almost provoked with Beatrice for throwing herself with such gusto into the performance. After the

tremendous emotion he felt sure she had experienced the preceding night, it seemed to him incredible that she could now appear so light-hearted and careless—so indifferent to anything but mere amusement.

"She must be a consummate actress off the stage, as well as on it," he mentally ejaculated, as he was listening to the encomiums Mr. Carleton was lavishing on Beatrice.

The green-room was now full of merriment; all fears and uncertainties were over, and the performers were allowed to refresh themselves with champagne, which, until now, Colonel Morley had vigorously denied them. They were to join the audience presently at supper, and there was to be some dancing afterwards; but they all enjoyed lingering for a few moments, amidst the relics of their labours, talking the half-theatrical jargon which had become familiar to them during the last few

days. Captain Denbigh, with his face still rouged, and wearing the *fast* dandyfied costume in which he had enacted his last part, was, of course, busied with Beatrice.

Lionel Constable, who was talking to Mrs. Carleton, could not help watching them, as they stood near a cheval-glass, before which each performer had paraded in turn.

"Did you see the ring he put on her finger in the first scene?" asked Mrs. Carleton, looking in the same direction; "it was a splendid emerald one, no mock affair, I can assure you."

"Belongs to one of his sisters, perhaps," said Lionel.

"*Perhaps*," said Mrs. Carleton; "she has not taken it off though. There, did you not see it flash, as she lifted the glass, just now?"

Yes; Lionel had seen it, and he had seen that Captain Denbigh's eyes were upon it also. At this moment Mr. Carleton

approached, to speak to his wife, and Lionel seized the opportunity of escaping. He walked close past Beatrice and Captain Denbigh, and heard Beatrice say, in reply to a low-toned speech of her companion,

"No, indeed, I cannot hear of such a thing. I could not have believed it of you, Captain Denbigh; I call this taking advantage of the situation, and I would not have acted with you if——"

Lionel did not hear the rest of the sentence, and he did not see Beatrice again until they were all seated at supper. It was no business of his, certainly, and yet he could not help wondering whether the scrap of conversation he had heard related in any way to the emerald ring, and he looked rather curiously at her hand, to see if she still wore it. But it was gone, and he experienced a feeling of involuntary satisfaction in seeing her without it. Captain Denbigh was sitting by her, looking a little

less bright than usual; but before supper was over he was laughing and talking as much as ever, and he and Beatrice appeared upon the best terms together.

There was a good deal of speechifying, the healths of the actors and actresses being proposed, and then responded to, so that it was rather late before the party adjourned to the dancing-room.

Mr. Clyde went up to Beatrice as she was going off to dance with Captain Denbigh, and told her he did not wish her to stay late.

"Oh! I shall soon be ready, papa; but I must have a few dances in my own character, or I shall go away fancying myself still Miss Crinolina de Courcy."

"I wish you were," whispered Captain Denbigh; but Beatrice either did not hear, or feigned deafness.

"How beautifully Miss Clyde and Captain Denbigh dance together; don't you

think so, Mr. Constable?" said Mrs Newton to Lionel, who was standing near her. He was a dancing man, but he had not cared to engage a partner this time.

"I beg your pardon—yes, certainly they do."

"Miss Clyde is a young person quite out of the common order," pursued Mrs. Newton, "at least she strikes us so in this country neighbourhood—so highly accomplished, and such lively manners! I never saw any one with higher spirits. I am sure she is to be envied. And have you heard her sing, Mr. Constable? I assure you her voice is quite remarkable, and she has had the best masters, I have no doubt."

"She sings very well," said Lionel.

"It is no wonder, I think, she is so much admired," said Mrs. Newton; "some people blame her, I know, but I never listen to reports; and if her father does not object—ah! he is coming this way—do you know him? Mr. Clyde, there is a seat here—I

assure you it is a very good place for seeing the young people—Mr. Constable and I have been admiring your daughter's dancing, have we not, Mr. Constable? And, Mr. Clyde, I must congratulate you upon Miss Clyde's success—quite a perfect actress! It is wonderful the natural talent some people have, though no doubt cultivation goes a great way. I should not wonder now if, with cultivation, Miss Clyde were to arrive at being a second Mrs. Siddons."

"She has attempted quite a different line," said Mr. Clyde, smiling; "but I think she did it pretty well;" whilst Lionel could scarcely help laughing outright.

By this time the dance was over, and Beatrice seeing her father, instead of prolonging her promenade with Captain Denbigh, drew up, and sat down. She was soon overpowered by Mrs. Newton's compliments, and turned for relief to Mr. Constable.

"Did you not feel as if we had turned into a veritable *corps dramatique*, and acting had become the business of our lives?" she said to him, after one or two remarks. "I am sure I did, and I am glad I went through the experience, as I can realize now so much more vividly how an actress must feel when the decisive moment arrives, the bell rings, and the drop-scene is raised."

"I cannot say I felt it so acutely as you, but still I am glad I have not missed the charades. The more we can understand how all classes of people feel, the better. Besides, I think we are all far better acquainted with each other than we should have been without our rehearsals and little difficulties; and there have been very few of the unpleasantnesses that generally occur when people are very intimately associated together."

"No, everything has passed off very

well," said Beatrice, but Lionel thought he saw her colour rather heightened.

"Will you dance now?" he said, as the music struck up; "I think this is the dance you promised me."

Beatrice assented, and the two waltzed away together. Lionel danced well, and the music was inspiriting; the favourite "First Love" waltz. "What a shame to give such a name to a waltz!" they overheard a young lady say to her partner as they passed. Lionel looked at Beatrice. "Do you agree with that opinion?"

"I don't know," said Beatrice, lightly; "perhaps the waltz is as good as the thing."

She blushed as soon as she had spoken, and Lionel did not immediately reply. When they stopped, he said,

"The waltz has been delicious, whatever 'First Love' may be; I have never experienced the sensation, but novelists and poets would persuade one that it is ecstatic."

"I have not much faith in novelists and poets," said Beatrice.

"Perhaps you do not wish to have."

"On the contrary, I do. I would exchange places with the heroine of almost every story I have ever read."

"What! with the 'agony piled up'"?

"If the agony is piled up, there are generally extenuating circumstances, such as don't occur in real life. Actual things are so tedious; day after day comes, and brings no change. But we are wasting the music—I am quite rested."

Lionel obeyed the hint, though he would have liked to hear Beatrice finish her sentence. When the dance was over, they walked into the passage, sauntering about for some time, and then sitting down on one of the couches. Their conversation, trivial at first, soon grew interesting; peculiarly so to Lionel, from the interest which the manners and character of Beatrice had

aroused in him. The dash of bitterness in her views almost irritated him; it was so incongruous with the notion he would otherwise have formed of her nature.

"There is a quadrille beginning," said Beatrice, at length, "shall we return to the room?"

"If you wish it; perhaps you are going to dance; otherwise I see no object in joining the crush."

"I thought perhaps you had yourself a partner, and might wish to find her," said Beatrice.

"No; I prefer sitting out quadrilles—so, if you are not going to dance, shall we stay?"

Beatrice agreed, saying she seldom danced quadrilles.

"You are quite right. There are plenty of people who dance nothing else. But perhaps you are cold here: shall I get your cloak?"

"No, thank you; I am quite warm enough," said Beatrice. The allusion to the cold carried back simultaneously her own thoughts and Lionel's to the night before, and there was a short silence. At last Beatrice said, somewhat abruptly,

"You must be very fond of your sister, Mr. Constable!"

"I am," said Lionel, with an amused look.

"You are thinking my remark very inconsequent," said Beatrice; "and I really don't know why I made it. I think it was because the idea of her open, guileless character flashed upon me just then. She makes me feel so old and hard, that I can scarcely wish her to like me."

"I can assure you, Miss Clyde, that both she and my mother like you."

"Does Mrs. Constable? I am astonished at that. I was afraid I shocked her, and all good motherly people. I am so unlike her favourite, Dora Lyttelton."

"You would not like to imitate Dora Lyttelton, though, to win any one's favour?" said Lionel.

"Not being what I am; but I might perhaps wish to exchange with her."

"You are all for change," said Lionel, with a searching look; "a short time ago, you wished you could turn yourself into some fictitious heroine, now you are wishing to be a common-place young lady."

"Perhaps you don't know what it is to be sick and wearied of your own identity, and so cannot comprehend," said Beatrice. "I do, and I feel so imprisoned in myself, I long to change utterly. To leave oneself, even for a few minutes, must be rapture, I think."

"I suppose you only mean one form of dissatisfaction with oneself; every one longs at times to be free from his own faults, his prejudices—even fancies."

"It would not be enough to be free from

faults and fancies. There would still be the fetters—the being what we are—what we must be—what we cannot escape from."

The wild fire in Beatrice's eye, as she spoke, reminded Lionel of her looks on the preceding evening. Perhaps she saw his inquiring gaze fixed upon her, for in another moment her tone changed, and she said,

"I am falling into a habit I detest—talking of my own thoughts and feelings. I suppose it is an indication of a narrow mind and few interests. Tell me something amusing now, as a change."

"It is impossible to be amusing on demand," said Lionel, laughing; "besides, I am far more inclined to be melancholy to-night, and to meditate on the fleeting nature of human pleasures. I am going away to-morrow evening."

"Are you? I thought Amy expected you to be at home at Christmas."

"I am coming back before then; some unexpected business takes me away now for a short time."

"Oh, then I don't pity you, as you will not be alone at Christmas. Not that I care much for family gatherings, and anniversaries are painful things as one grows older."

"I agree with you; and some are absolutely odious—anniversaries of examinations, and such like. There is only one custom of keeping particular days that takes my fancy, and that is the German one of gold and silver marriages. It is a charming idea, I think: fancy the old couple wearing once more their bridal crowns, reviewing the long years passed together, and renewing in imagination the joy of their youth."

"Or the bitterness," said Beatrice, with emphasis. "I can imagine cases in which the bridal crowns would seem made of thorns, even after fifty years had dulled the sen-

sations, and a still grayness had settled over life."

"You are pleased to be cynical, Miss Clyde," said Lionel, with some earnestness; "but I cannot believe you really feel all you say. You see beauty, I am convinced, in the simple trust and abiding love which generated the custom, and you should not let your judgment be warped by some cases of heartlessness and worldliness, which are the result of our over-wrought civilization. To restore your faith in truth and love, you should read a little story of Auerbach's, called 'Mimi und Brosi;' it is a piece of simple, genuine nature."

"I will read it," said Beatrice, looking up at Lionel's face. His expression, full of ardour and candour, faith in all the world, and in himself, struck her powerfully; and yet, from some hidden cause, pained her. Swallowing down a sigh, she dashed quickly into another subject.

When the quadrilles were over, dancers poured into the passage, and Captain Denbigh, instantly discovering Beatrice, claimed her for the next dance.

"You must excuse me," she said, "it is getting late, and papa will be wishing to go home. I am just going, like a dutiful daughter, to say I am ready."

"But this one dance, surely! Mr. Clyde will not mind; he is busily engaged in a discussion with Mrs. Newton."

"Poor papa!" said Beatrice, laughingly; "then I am sure I ought to go and release him."

She resisted all attempts at persuasion, accepted the arm Lionel offered, and left Captain Denbigh twirling his moustache with a disconsolate air.

When the Clydes were gone, Lionel Constable remembered that he ought to look after his mother. He fancied the room had suddenly lost much of its bright-

ness, and that the girls around him were singularly tame and uninteresting.

Mrs. Constable was sitting in a group of ladies, gently amused at what was going on, and pleased to see Amy enjoying herself, when Lionel approached. She made room for him near her, and asked him what he had been doing; she had not seen him dancing lately.

"Mr. Constable has grown idle," said a soft voice, near; it was that of Dora Lyttelton. "I think he prefers sitting in the hall to dancing."

"Not when I am accused of anything so foreign to my nature as idleness," said Lionel, starting up. "Miss Dora Lyttelton, which of the next four dances shall I have the pleasure of dancing with you?"

"I am tired," said Dora, coldly; "this perpetual dancing wears me out."

"Sit down, Dora, my dear," said Mrs. Constable; "there is room for you."

Dora sat down for a few minutes, admired Amy's dress—she was just then passing—and exchanged a few observations with mother and son on indifferent subjects. All her remarks were sensible, and given with a tone of deference to her elders, and also with a certain languid softness of manner, that made many people call her interesting. After a short time she rose, saying that she, as a daughter of the house, could not be allowed to remain inactive any longer, and moved away to a cluster of partnerless girls. Her behaviour would have seemed amiable, had it been less tinged with the air of martyrdom; and that, apparently, was invisible to Mrs. Constable, for she said to Lionel, who dropped into Dora's vacant place,

"I do think that girl is one of the sweetest in the world. Though quite cheerful, and ready to amuse any one, she is never frivolous or light. I consider her manners perfect."

"I dare say they are," said Lionel, absently.

"What are you thinking of, Lionel? I know in a moment when you are not attending—you have some law case in your head, I suppose; but remember, this is a holiday."

"I am not forgetting it, I assure you. What were you saying about Dora Lyttelton? Yes, her figure is certainly rather graceful, and her voice is soft and low."

"An excellent thing in woman," remarked Colonel Morley, coming up at the moment; "but perhaps you prefer something more sparkling than the gentle, low-toned creatures—Miss Clyde, for instance."

"Miss Clyde was not at all sparkling when first she came," said Mrs. Constable; "I never saw any one more grave and gloomy than she was the first evening I met her. She changed quite suddenly."

"I don't consider her exactly lively now," said Lionel.

"She is fitful—dependent upon moods," said Colonel Morley; "I should not like such a woman for my wife, but Denbigh appears to be of a different opinion. I wonder what his father would say; however, there is no fear of his being accepted."

"In that case, Miss Clyde has no business to encourage him as she does," said one of the chaperons near Mrs. Constable.

"Ah!" said Lionel, laughing, "I see you, too, Mrs. Baker, require to learn those charming lines on 'Everybody's business:'

'Is it anybody's business what another person's is?'"

"That is Lionel's motto, at present, I think," said Mrs. Constable; "I don't know where he picked up the lines."

"I suspect they are his own," said Colonel Morley.

"No, indeed; I wish they were. And I wish I could repeat the whole, but there is an alliteration in them which is difficult to

catch, though it haunts one. I do not even know who the author is, but I respect him as a man of sense, in advance of his age."

"I wish you would look for Amy, Lionel," said his mother; "she has had enough dancing now, and it is quite time to go."

Lionel obeyed, nothing loth; and in a few minutes the two departed—and before very long the party broke up.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END OF THE SHADOWS.

BEATRICE CLYDE was sitting alone in the breakfast-room the following day. She had risen late; her father had breakfasted without her and gone out; her mother was absorbed in a book, and she was left to her own devices. There were marks of care and thought on her features this morning, and her occupation, that of writing letters, was apparently distasteful to her. She took from her desk a crumpled piece of paper and pored over it for a considerable time with firmly-closed lips and knitted brows;

then she seized a sheet of paper and began to write, but sheet after sheet was torn up and thrown into the fire before she could frame an epistle to suit her fancy. At length she hurriedly scribbled a few lines, and, without reading them over, placed them in an envelope, whilst the fragment she had studied so long was quickly torn into atoms and consigned to the flames. A kind of fierce pleasure glittered in her eyes as each separate shred turned into a black filmy flake, and drawing a long breath she said low to herself,

"There is satisfaction in destruction. I feel now as if, had I the power, I could equal any fiendish woman I have ever read of."

Then, as if shocked at her passionate outburst, she drooped her head on her hands, and tears, heavy and soundless, drawn as life-blood from her heart, gathered in her eyes and fell slowly down her cheeks. A

sound of steps in the hall roused her from her position. She dashed away her tears, returned to the seat she had quitted, placed the letter she had written in her desk, and awaited the opening of the door.

Captain Denbigh was announced, and he advanced with eager haste to shake hands. Yet his manner was less assured than usual, and he sat for some moments without speaking, or, at any rate, only returning vague answers to the stream of light small-talk which Beatrice poured forth in desperation, for she too was not free from nervousness.

"Miss Clyde," said Captain Denbigh at last, without replying to her last question, "all this is of no use. I cannot stand it any longer. I have been delighting day after day in your presence, living on a few kind words and looks. But I cannot do any longer with only this; last night you made me miserable."

"Miserable! I thought you in very good spirits all the evening."

"Ah, you may scoff! I know I am not one of those sentimental fellows who can mope and sigh, and look martyrs and victims; but though I may go on laughing and dancing I can feel as truly as any of them. Miss Clyde, why would you not keep my ring?"

"Because I do not choose to receive presents from gentlemen," said Beatrice, proudly.

"But from me it was not an ordinary present. Ah, Miss Clyde, that scene of the ring was no acting with me. When I placed it on your finger, I did it with the most entire and devoted love a man can feel, and I trusted—I hoped you understood me, and would allow it to stay there."

"I don't know what could give you such an idea, Captain Denbigh; you must have strangely misinterpreted the pleasure I al-

lowed myself to feel in your society."

"You did take some pleasure, then?" he asked, eagerly.

"I liked you as a companion, and we agreed on most light, surface matters. I never intended our intercourse to go deeper, feeling sure our sympathies did not."

"But you cannot be quite sure! I know I seem a wild, careless fellow, Miss Clyde, but I have more in me than you see."

Beatrice smiled.

"Don't laugh at me, I beg; this is terrible earnest with me," he went on. "My words sound conceited, perhaps. I cannot say what I mean; but, Miss Clyde, you may believe me, all that is best and deepest in you would find an answering echo in my heart. Do not cast me off because in outer things I seem frivolous and weak. If you could resolve ever to be my wife," Captain Denbigh's voice sank low with repressed feeling, and the sound smote Beatrice's con-

science to the quick, "you might do anything you liked with me, and the truest, sincerest love should prove my gratitude."

"Captain Denbigh," said Beatrice, in a tone of greater seriousness and gentleness than she had yet employed, "it is no use prolonging this conversation—it is very painful to me to disappoint your hopes, and also to hear you attribute virtues to me which I do not possess. Be sure that I have none of the deep, good feelings which you fancy would raise yours. If you knew me as I am, you would, perhaps, hate me!"—her voice rose to almost passionate vehemence—"nay, as it is, you may hate me for misleading you. But, indeed, indeed, I did not think you cared so seriously about me. I cannot say, Captain Denbigh, how distressed I am!"

"And is there no hope?"

"None!"

The decided tone and air left no room for

doubt, and Captain Denbigh, with his eyes fixed on the ground, sat for some moments in perfect silence. Then, rising, he said,

"I am going, Miss Clyde; I will not appear a fool in your eyes any longer!"

"Captain Denbigh!"

"I have been a fool, I suppose, to misinterpret so sadly—so sadly for me, at anyrate! Good morning."

"You will shake hands—you will let us part friends? What can I say more?" said Beatrice, seeing him stand irresolute. "I have humbled myself to own I did wrong—I humble myself now to ask your forgiveness."

Her eyes, full of frank regret, were raised to his; her face wore its best, truest expression. Captain Denbigh could not resist; he seized her hand, wrung it warmly, and said,

"Miss Clyde, I should be a brute to blame you now; I have been unfortunate—that is

all! I must bear the consequence of my mistake. Good-bye."

He hurried from the room, and left Beatrice sitting, resting her arms on the table, her head bowed over them. She was wretched and humiliated. She had misled —if not wilfully, yet thoughtlessly—a man whose generous forbearance overwhelmed her with shame. *He* might forgive her; but she could not forgive herself. Her love of amusement and excitement had led her to this. Oh! that the last two months could be blotted out of her life! Better the blank gloom she had endured before, than the feverish pleasure which had ended thus, in sorrow and disappointment to another— in dissatisfaction to herself. She had sought to catch a fleeting shadow, forgetting that what were shadows to her might be realities to others.

Beatrice did not know how long she had been absorbed in her own thoughts, when a

footstep in the room made her raise her head. It was her father's; and his glance, as she met it, was fixed upon her in agitation and displeasure.

"Beatrice! what is the matter?"

"Nothing, papa." And she began, in confusion, to open her desk.

"There is something," said Mr. Clyde, drawing a chair to the writing-table, and sitting down exactly opposite to her, "and I can guess what it is. I met Captain Denbigh as I came through the lodge-gates. I asked him why he was not staying luncheon, and received scarcely any answer. He had a look on his face which I never saw there before, but which I have seen on other men's faces, and generally found to mean the same thing. He has been disappointed, and you are the cause, Beatrice."

"Papa, this is hardly fair——"

"Perhaps, and I want no confessions. But I am grievously shocked and disap-

pointed. I have given you warnings, Beatrice, but you received them with pride; and, knowing that I have forfeited the right to speak to you as some fathers might do, I have endeavoured to rest satisfied with your assurances. But you have abused my confidence, and you have used the privilege my——"

"Stop! papa!" interrupted Beatrice, starting up, with glowing cheeks and glittering eyes—"accuse me of anything but that. I have been wilful and selfish, but I have never despised your authority; and I cannot bear that you should think me so ungenerous as to let any circumstances——"

"Whatever your motives may have been, you have acted in a way in which I trusted a child of mine would never have done. Perhaps I have no business to speak to you of honour; but I did hope that, as a Clyde, you had some sense of it. You have shown you have not, by leading on a young man

to propose marriage to you—to *you*——"

"Papa, spare me!"

"I must say what I think, this time. I know that there are girls who pride themselves upon the number of offers they receive; but you, Beatrice, I believed superior to vanity of that kind. You need no assurances to convince you that you are beautiful and attractive; and yet you have acted as the weakest of vain girls—you, too, who ought to have felt yourself shut out, by an impregnable barrier, from everything of the kind."

"Papa, you need not remind me of this," said Beatrice, clasping her hands passionately. "My chain is for ever, only too real and present, God knows!"

There was a pause of some moments' duration; various emotions displayed themselves on Mr. Clyde's face; his brow was contracted with pain and regret; and his eyes fastened themselves with a wistful ten-

derness upon his daughter's agitated frame, whilst his mouth quivered with sorrow, in which some feeling of shame seemed mingled.

Beatrice sat down again. No tears were pressed from her eyes; but a few short gasps told of the tumult within her mind.

Mr. Clyde spoke at length, with stern effort, and in a repressed tone, from which all tenderness was forcibly crushed out.

"Beatrice, I see you feel shame. I cannot wish you to do less, though your suffering pains me. I leave you to consider how you can best, in future, support your own honour and dignity, and mine. We must have no more of these—these *wilful* and *thoughtless* misleadings."

The last words were given with strong emphasis, and Mr. Clyde left the room. Beatrice remained for some time in the same posture, until, indeed, a servant announced that luncheon was ready, when she sprang up, and, sending a message to her father

that she was not well, and did not wish for any luncheon, she repaired to her own room, locked the door, and began pacing to and fro in one of her restless, agonized moods. Sheer weariness compelled her to stop, and she threw herself upon a couch, and lay, for about an hour, in a half-prostrate condition. Gradually, a species of calmness stole over her, and she had almost schooled herself into bearing her daily burden with outer composure, when a knock at her door disturbed her. Larkins, her mother's maid, who was also her own attendant, was there.

"Miss Clyde, if you please, Miss Constable and her brother are in the drawing-room; would you wish to see them, or shall I say you are ill?"

"Oh, say I will come directly," said Beatrice, rising hastily, and rushing to the glass to arrange her hair. "Larkins, do get me a clean collar, at once; mine is all crushed."

"I would not go down, Miss, if I were you—you look as if you had a dreadful headache."

"It is nothing—don't tell mamma I have been lying down;" and, rapidly finishing her toilet, Beatrice hastened down-stairs.

Lionel and Amy were in the drawing-room, standing at one of the windows, and they turned round as she entered. Lionel saw at once that she was either ill or tired. He had time to watch her, whilst she was speaking to Amy, and, in spite of her air of languor and fatigue, he thought she had never looked more attractive. There was a softness about her whole appearance and demeanour which struck him as a new charm. Her dress was less rich than usual, and the soft, dark material fell about her in sweeping folds, unbroken by flounce or ornament; whilst the exquisitely-turned throat rising above the small, plain collar, and the delicate hands and wrists peeping from

beneath the wide, flowing sleeves, appeared even whiter than in the blaze of evening toilette. Her cheeks were slightly flushed, her mouth had a pensive expression, and her eyes, shadowed by the heavy dark rings which spoke of thought or weeping, revealed depths of feeling far beyond what they usually displayed. Her words had not their accustomed lightness and gaiety, but her manner was cordial and friendly, and without the slightest tinge of the levity which was sometimes attributed to it.

"And you enjoyed last night very much, I am sure," she said to Amy, after some conversation on the charades had passed; "no one could look at you and doubt it."

"Did I seem so much pleased?—mamma told me so too. But you must have enjoyed yourself, Miss Clyde, and your acting was so praised."

"That is a reason why I should have enjoyed myself, certainly," said Beatrice;

"well—yes—I think the evening was pleasant."

"But you look tired to-day," said Amy, "does she not, Lionel?"

"You know I am older than you, and dissipation shows its effects more upon me," said Beatrice.

Amy laughed, and exclaimed,

"I am sure every one always says you are most untiring. But do you know that Lionel is going away this evening?—he is on his way to the station now, but I thought we might start a little earlier, and call to see you."

"Papa will be sorry he has not seen you, Mr. Constable," said Beatrice; "he is out now, but I hope, when you come back, we shall see you at the palace. Dear me!" and she laughed lightly, "how very regal that sounds! I have only lately accustomed myself to the idea of living in a palace."

Larkins here appeared with a message.

Mrs. Clyde would be glad to see Miss Constable if she would walk up to her room. Amy had been several times to see Mrs. Clyde, who had taken rather a fancy to her, and, with a glance at Beatrice, she rose, and followed Larkins.

"A palace!" repeated Lionel, echoing Beatrice's last sentence; "yes, it does sound very grand. But I wonder you are not afraid to live in such a place."

"On account of the grandeur?"

"No; on account of the ghosts," he said, solemnly.

Beatrice laughed.

"Oh! you may laugh; but this is just the sort of place that ought to be haunted, if it is not. I have no doubt that some of the old Bishops have been poisoned here by would-be successors."

"If they have," said Beatrice, "I don't see why their ghosts should visit us now. The time for vengeance must be long past."

"But did you ever hear of a ghost appearing for any purpose which we can see to be beneficial? Don't they always show themselves to indifferent people, who can have no interest in their being alive or dead? And yet, one can fancy instances in which a spiritual visitation might be advantageous. A spendthrift nephew, anxious to hear of the death of a rich old aunt, might be able to satisfy his creditors some time before he might otherwise do—I mean, if he were at a great distance from her—if the ghost appeared to him at the moment of its becoming due—it would be far better than a telegram."

"Yes; and there are situations in which the assurance of a person's death might be even more acceptable," said Beatrice. She spoke in a tone so much more earnest than Lionel's *badinage* had seemed likely to call forth, that he was surprised, and, in a more serious manner, he added,

"However, it is hardly right to talk of such things in joke. We all have some faith in a state of being not recognised by our limited perceptions."

"All people—all nations have it," said Beatrice. "I wonder why?"

"I suppose it is the longing to escape from the actual; the desire to be free from the narrow bounds of the senses."

"Yet, how few people own it, or like to talk about it!"

"It is a sort of confession of inferiority, rather derogatory to our grand views of human nature. We like to think ourselves the loftiest of beings."

"But we are as lofty as ghosts, surely."

"I was not meaning what are popularly called ghosts, but rather spiritual existences, which may be around us, though impalpable to our senses. However, this is very wild talk, and if some of my friends heard it, I should lose the character of a matter-of-fact

man of the world, which it is my present aim to support."

"You need not fear me. I shall not expose you," said Beatrice. But Lionel would not go on, and led the conversation into another channel. They were deep in a literary discussion, when Amy entered, saying, as she came in, that it was time to go to the station.

Beatrice went into the hall with them, and then was persuaded by Amy to put on her hat, and accompany them along the terrace, and down the drive, as far as the lodge gates. The afternoon was mild for the season, and there was scarcely a breath of wind to stir the brown and orange leaves which still remained on the trees. They lingered a few moments at the gates, noticing the tints of the oaks, contrasted by the dark fir trees, and then, with a few cordial words and warm hand-shakings, they parted. Beatrice slowly retraced her steps to the house,

thinking over the whole of her short intimacy with Lionel Constable, and half envying Amy for having him for a brother. He was a man, she thought, of whom a woman might make a friend.

CHAPTER IX.

A YOUNG LADY FORMED ON "PRUNES AND PRISM."

THE *tête-à-tête* dinner was not agreeable this evening to either Beatrice or her father. Few words passed between them, and both were constrained in manner. Beatrice looked sad and thoroughly depressed, and Mr. Clyde gravely displeased and sorrowful. Almost as soon as dinner was over Beatrice retired to her own room, where she sat over the fire mournfully retracing the events of the last few weeks, bitterly repenting her conduct, yet occasionally giving vent to a

fierce, rebellious ebullition of wrath against her fate, which had led her to seek oblivion of care in recklessly sacrificing the happiness of another person to her capricious pleasure.

Feeling at length utterly wearied of communion with herself, she rose, and went to see her mother, hoping, in light talk, to forget for a short time her load of self-reproach and dissatisfaction. But she found, to her surprise, that her father was in her mother's dressing-room, and she soon gathered from his gloomy silence, and her mother's discontented look, that some unpleasant subject had been discussed by them. And yet she did not think that her father would have troubled her mother with the history of the affair which had so disturbed him.

Perhaps Mr. Clyde might not have done so, had not his wife's curiosity been already excited. Larkins had told her of Captain Denbigh's visit in the morning, and of her

young mistress's illness and apparent depression in the afternoon, with various comments which she had sufficient acuteness to make; and Mrs. Clyde had never rested until she had extorted the truth from her husband, so much of it, at least, as he himself knew.

"My poor child, how is your head now?" said Mrs. Clyde, in her most fondling tones, as she made room for Beatrice to sit on the couch on which she was reclining; "Larkins told me you looked so ill this afternoon; and no wonder, after what you have gone through."

"Beatrice has not gone through anything very painful, unless her conscience has been reproaching her," said Mr. Clyde. "Otherwise she is not the person to complain: she is not the chief sufferer."

"Poor Captain Denbigh! I am sure I feel for him too. That day he dined here, when I was so well, you know, I am sure

he kept me amused the whole evening, and prevented me from being tired. I never felt my back ache, though there is not a single seat in the drawing-room that rests me properly. And I saw he admired Beatrice then."

"You saw it," said Mr. Clyde with some severity, "and yet you never warned her?"

"My dear Arthur, I could not bear to spoil her pleasure, and I don't see why she should not have, at least, the gratification of being admired. Poor child! her life is little enough satisfaction to her!"

"But you let her encourage attentions which you understood."

"Could I have had the heart to put ideas into her head which would have made her stiff and formal? I was glad enough to see her to such advantage. I am sure I have not often had any satisfaction in my child. I am sorry for the poor young man,

certainly, and I wish it could have been different, and he could—they looked very nice together—Beatrice, my pet, take this cushion for your head. It is sad for you to think of what might have been, if you had been allowed to follow the dictates of your own heart."

"Mamma, pray do not talk in this way; it is better not to mention the subject—and do not imagine that under any circumstances Captain Denbigh would have been my choice—that I ever dared to think of him, or should dare to think of anyone."

Beatrice's face was covered with burning blushes as she spoke, and she stopped abruptly.

"I should hope not," said Mr. Clyde; "bad as it is to lead on a young man with false expectations, it would be worse still to indulge any answering feeling. No, Beatrice; I trust you could never forget yourself so far as that."

"I am sure it would be no wonder if she did," said Mrs. Clyde; "and no one could blame her."

"Alice! is this the way you speak before your daughter?" said Mr. Clyde, angrily; "if I once imagined that any of those flirting, chattering officers could attract a girl of Beatrice's sense, I would forbid them my house, and not allow her to go into society."

"Then you would be a most unnatural father," said Mrs. Clyde, in a passionate tone, which sounded strangely strained, and rose into a quiver almost like a cry. "You would deny her the little amusement which makes her lot bearable—shut her up with a poor invalid like me, and a dull bookworm like yourself—crush every remnant of life and gaiety out of her, as it has been crushed out of me——"

"Mamma, do be quiet," interrupted Beatrice, seizing her mother's trembling hands, "I will do anything to please papa—

remain shut up if he chooses, since I am not to be trusted in society. He knows I am sorry for what has happened—I have said so, and I will be careful in future."

"I have no wish, Beatrice, to shut you up, or to be harsh," said Mr. Clyde; "I feel, only too sadly, that you have suffered much for me. God forbid that I should deprive you of any recreation that is in my power to give you. Until now, I have done so with confidence, and your behaviour, except during the last few weeks, has been dignified and discreet."

"Because she was always grim and reserved, I suppose," said Mrs. Clyde; "now, when she has been brighter and pleasanter, she is to be scolded out of it. But I would not, if I were Beatrice—no—in spite of circumstances and warnings, and her father's injustice, I would enjoy myself. I would seize the advantages my youth and beauty gave me."

"Alice, it is no use speaking, if you encourage Beatrice in such folly," began Mr. Clyde.

"Papa," interrupted Beatrice, "be assured that I have no wish to repeat the conduct which has displeased you. I am ready to promise—no, I *cannot* promise," she continued impetuously, "I cannot be sure of myself—I don't know what wild freaks I may be tempted to—I am sure of nothing—nothing in all the world, except that I am wretched!"

"You see, Arthur, what you have made her," said Mrs. Clyde, reproachfully; "my poor darling, how she suffers! She will be old before her time—my beautiful Beatrice!"

"Is she the only sufferer?" asked Mr. Clyde, drawing closer to the sofa, and looking on his wife and daughter with a face on which the haggard lines seemed to have deepened. "Alice, the young may suffer,

but they cannot be without hope; they have a life-time before them, with, at any rate, the power of acting well, and turning the hardest circumstances to profit; but for the old, weary, and with their energies depressed, conscious of having done their work ill in the world, and of having drawn the innocent after them into misery, there is nothing left. Beatrice, if my words have pained you, and sounded hard, I ask you to forgive me. Your father needs your pity, my child."

He bent down and kissed Beatrice's forehead as he ceased speaking; then quitted the room.

Mrs. Clyde burst into a fit of weeping when he was gone: they all conspired, she believed, to make her miserable, and to bring up wretched subjects before her. If they would only be quiet, and not worry her with their troubles! With her delicate health, she could not bear them; but Arthur

never thought of her comfort, and Beatrice was unfeeling.

Beatrice could only fondle and coax her mother, until the weak passion had exhausted itself. Then Mrs. Clyde retracted her blame; called her a dear, good girl, the delight of her life, and only wished she could be happy. If Captain Denbigh could have been accepted, it might have been so nice—he was so good-looking and gentlemanly.

Beatrice tried to banish the subject, by degrees, and at length succeeded in inducing her mother to listen to the end of a love-story they had been reading together. Thus the evening passed, until Mrs. Clyde grew sleepy, and Larkins was summoned to prepare her for rest.

When Beatrice joined her father downstairs, no reference was made to what had passed in the dressing-room; and, by mutual consent, the subject of Captain Den-

bigh was entirely banished. The only words exchanged between them related to an article in the *Saturday Review*, into the discussion of which they threw themselves with a sort of spasmodic eagerness.

From this day a change was perceptible in the manner of Beatrice in society; she was much quieter, and did not give so much room for malicious accusations against her, yet her new style did not tend to make her more popular. The tinge of bitterness in her speeches was more apparent now than when it had been carried off by light laughter, and her occasionally sneering tone quite destroyed her chance of being esteemed an amiable person. And yet, she was at times so charming towards those whom she cared to please, that she was not entirely without defenders. It is true, the tide of masculine favour rather turned against her after her rejection of Captain Denbigh. The officers of the 121st resented the slight

that had been cast upon one of their *corps*, for not one of them doubted that he had been refused. He was far too transparent to be able to conceal effectually that the relations between himself and Miss Clyde had come to a crisis—or to avoid betraying, when they met in society, the different terms upon which they stood to each other. It was in vain that he still spoke in Miss Clyde's praise, and that she endeavoured to meet him without any show of embarrassment. Colonel Morley, at any rate, was far too conversant with Captain Denbigh's disposition to be under any mistake as to what had occurred, and what he knew was soon communicated to the whole mess.

And though Colonel Morley never blamed Miss Clyde, and persisted in saying he had foreseen the whole affair, and that it would do Denbigh no harm, but rather good, the younger and more excitable portion of Captain Denbigh's friends were of a dif-

ferent opinion. Mr. Curzon, who had witnessed more of the flirtation than any one else, from having been the most intimate at Wynthorpe House, the chief scene of the meetings between the two, declared that Beatrice was a thoroughly accomplished flirt, and a consummate hypocrite; and in the appropriateness of these epithets most concurred.

Doubtless, had Beatrice cared to exercise her powers of fascination, she could have brought back the allegiance of that portion of H.M.'s 121st Regiment quartered at Railton; but she was in no mood to expend coquettish glances or winning speeches for the sake of restoring her credit. Besides, a quiet period succeeded the gaiety which had lately flashed across the neighbourhood; and during the few weeks before Christmas Beatrice remained much at home, taking long solitary walks, riding with her father, and paying occasional visits to the Lyttel-

tons and Constables. Mrs. Constable and Amy were still friendly with her; however much they, or rather Mrs. Constable, might disapprove her conduct, she was welcome at the Laurels, and generally displayed there the best and brightest side of her character.

But even there annoyances sometimes arose; and she felt defiant risings in her heart, as the consciousness that she was only half-understood, and that wrong motives were attributed to her most innocent actions, forced itself upon her. At times her spirit revolted against the manner in which she was occasionally treated by those of her own sex; she attempted to despise the womanish inuendoes sometimes cast upon her; said to herself that women were mean, weak, cowardly; that they might all range themselves against her, she did not care; she could bear their scorn and dislike better than their approval; but a mood of this kind could not long endure. Beatrice was

too lonely, and too unhappy, to be utterly indifferent to sympathy. She longed for friendship—even an imperfect friendship, with only half-confidence, would have been a relief to her—but she did not know a single woman with whom she could imagine herself forming a real intimacy. Her intercourse, however, with Mrs. Constable and Amy gave her the greatest sense of rest and congeniality which she enjoyed.

One evening, when Mr. Clyde was dining with a bachelor acquaintance, Beatrice went to drink tea at the Laurels. Amy had asked her in the morning, and she had not expected to meet any other visitors, so she was surprised, and a little disappointed, to find Dora Lyttelton established in the drawing-room. She had called in the afternoon, it appeared, and had been persuaded to stay by Mrs. Constable, who fully appreciated what were considered her peculiar charms—her quiet manners, and feminine acquire-

ments. Dora was working industriously at a slipper, which Beatrice immediately recognised as one of a pair Mrs. Constable intended to present to Lionel on his return. The pattern was particularly impressed upon her memory, because she had been consulted as to the best mode of working it, and had utterly failed in giving any valuable opinion. The difficulty had apparently been solved by Dora, and under her skilful fingers the pattern was growing into definite form and beauty. Amy soon called attention to it.

"Is it not pretty, Miss Clyde? You see Dora has found out the proper way of working it. Mamma and I could not determine where the beads should come in; we did not like the piece that had been worked at the shop."

"I remember," said Beatrice.

"It was in such bad taste," said Dora; "and yet the pattern itself is pretty," and she displayed her work.

"I am only afraid I shall not work it so nicely as you, my dear," said Mrs. Constable.

"Oh! there is no difficulty," answered Dora; "I will put you fairly in the way, dear Mrs. Constable, and then I am sure you will manage admirably. But if I were you, I would never buy a slipper pattern again—one can make much prettier ones."

"I am sure I could not," said Mrs. Constable; "but you have a regular genius for work."

"Genius! oh, no; many people do the same, and it is quite easy to make patterns —don't you think so, Miss Clyde?"

"I don't know, I never tried. I know very little about work, but I should fancy it is rather difficult to make a really beautiful design."

"In making patterns," said Dora, "I only follow the rules of my own taste, as I should do in dress."

"You cannot do better," said Mrs. Constable, "for in that you are always correct. I wish Amy would take a lesson from you —she is rather careless."

"Oh! mamma, I am sure I thought fondness for dress was one of my weaknesses."

"Fondness is very different from care," said Mrs. Constable; "people who are fond of dress often follow an absurd fashion to its extreme, which is never done by those who have true taste."

Beatrice was conscious that these words contained a slight hit at herself; for she knew that though her dress never transgressed against the rules of artistic taste, she did yet adopt a few fashions which a person of Mrs. Constable's notions would be likely to consider verging upon the "fast" and conspicuous style. She was vexed with herself for minding such a trifle, but the whole tone of the conversation gave her the sense of being in an in-

ferior position, though no one would have imagined so from her *nonchalante* air. Dora Lyttelton always made her more uncomfortable than any one else, especially when only ladies were present; if there were gentlemen, she could find refuge in badinage with them, from the scrutiny of Dora's cold, quiet eyes, the tacit protest of her serene manner.

"I wish you would instruct me in your art of making tea," said Dora, as she sipped the beverage Mrs. Constable had just poured out; "none of us can equal you, though I believe we get our tea from the same place."

"I get mine from Liverpool," said Mrs. Constable, "and I gave your mother the address, so I should think yours is the same as mine. And as to art, I am sure, Dora, I have always found yours very good."

"Ah! no; I am sure there is more in your way than you fancy."

"Well, I really cannot account for it; Lionel, indeed, always says that Amy's tea is not half as good as his mother's, so I indulge him by making it for him, though I think it is high time for me to vacate my office. I like to see a young woman presiding at a tea-table."

"Ah! mamma gave up to Helen and me, years ago," said Dora, "and I think we make better tea than many people, but still I always say yours is the best we ever taste. Do you get your tea from Liverpool, Miss Clyde?"

"Really, I don't know—I never inquired—I care about it so little myself, and papa always drinks coffee."

"But your mother, my dear," said Mrs. Constable; "invalids are generally particular about such little things."

"I never heard mamma complain much of the tea; Larkins knows her tastes, and I do not trouble myself much about the matter."

"There is such a difference in people," said Dora; "when mamma is ill, she always chooses to have her arrowroot made by me —and really I think servants cannot make such things so well as we can."

"There is a peculiar refinement of flavour communicated by the touch of gentle fingers, I suppose!" said Beatrice; but the irony of her tone escaped Dora.

"Well, I believe there is something in that; and, as for me, I am peculiarly fond of making such little delicacies, and waiting upon invalids."

"It is a very good thing," said Mrs. Constable, "for many of a woman's holiest duties are by the bedsides of her friends."

"I hope they will not often fall in my way," said Beatrice, "for I am sure they would not suit me."

She could not resist making this speech, which would, she was aware, call forth much disapproval. Her auditors could not

know by intuition that she had watched by her father's bed through many nights of dangerous illness, and that now she daily fulfilled many of the most arduous duties of a nurse—those, namely, of listening to, and sympathising with, the tedious complainings of a fanciful invalid. But in Dora Lyttelton's presence she was continually tempted to make the worst of herself; her antagonistic spirit was roused, and she endeavoured to appear, in every respect, the opposite of Dora.

Amy's "Oh, Miss Clyde!" was uttered in a tone that showed she did not quite credit Beatrice's words; but Mrs. Constable's surprised "My dear!" and Dora's look of restrained horror and polite amazement, indicated nothing but the severest construction of her speech. When tea was over, the ladies again drew out their work, with the exception of Beatrice, who, in truth, did fail sadly in a feminine fondness for

employing her fingers in the graceful, delicate labours in which Dora excelled. Usually she looked upon this as a failing in herself, and attributed it partly to her having been brought up without other girls, and having depended so greatly upon her father for companionship; but, to-night, Dora's air of superiority, as her fingers dexterously moved about amidst the intricacies of the slipper-pattern, raised within her a contempt for womanly accomplishments; and when, at Mrs. Constable's request, she went to the piano, her singing betrayed the present tone of her mind. Utterly eschewing the simple ballads which suited Mrs. Constable's taste, she gave forth Italian bravuras, of the intense, operatic style—a mode of proceeding which, she was quite aware, would meet Dora's silent protest, at present, and elicit her languid remarks, "Theatrical!" "In bad taste!" afterwards. But music worked gradually a

change in her mood; and when at length she changed Verdi for Mendelssohn, and her rich voice rose, and swelled, and sank, and died away in one of his loveliest songs, the evil spirit within her seemed quelled, and her foolish bitterness appeared before her in its true deformity. She could, at this moment, have asked Dora's pardon for her antagonistic feelings; but Dora just then whispered a few words, which reached her ears, and destroyed her newly-found amiability; they were these:

"That song suits Miss Clyde—it was Captain Denbigh's favourite." And then, after a soft sigh, "Poor Captain Denbigh!"

Beatrice struck the last notes of accompaniment with loud decision, and then broke forth into a dashing, flirting song—a sort of thing she really disliked.

"They call me the gay canteeneer,
I'm the pet of the whole brigade;
There is not a man, from the rear to the van,
But salutes to my gay cockade."

The words rang out clear. The air with which they were given was bewitchingly gay and coquettish; likely enough to fascinate many a male listener, but not so well calculated to please a person like Mrs. Constable.

Beatrice had never sung this identical song in the presence of any of her friends of the 121st; but Mrs. Constable could not know that by instinct, nor was Dora likely to assist her in drawing such a conclusion. And, on this particular evening, and in her present frame of mind, Beatrice would not have objected to singing "The Canteeneer" before a whole army.

She parted from Mrs. Constable and Amy, when her visit was over, with the sensation that it had been the most uncomfortable one she had ever paid at the Laurels; and yet, when she said "good night," she felt a yearning for a few kind words from Mrs. Constable, a warmer pressure of her hand,

or, better still, a motherly kiss from her lips, such as was bestowed upon Dora Lyttelton. But Dora was an old friend, and yet more, a proper young lady; and Beatrice knew that she could not expect to be treated in the same way.

She was thoroughly dissatisfied with herself when she went home—utterly wearied with everything around her. Even the excitement of her flirtation with Captain Denbigh was looked back upon with some regret; it had not been positive enjoyment, but it had been a change—a something to break the monotony of her life. It was in vain that she strove to make herself like other young people; girlhood, with girlhood's hopes and girlhood's pleasures, lay divided from her by an immeasurable gulf. If she attempted to enter into the interests of her youthful companions, a horrible sense of unreality stole across her; and yet solitude was hard to bear: she dreaded being a prey

to her own thoughts, becoming shut up in her own consciousness; for she had experienced the agonies of such a state, and she revolted in thought from the mere remembrance of it.

CHAPTER X.

"Small talk, which cuts like powdered glass."

Lionel Constable had not been many days at his mother's house, after his return from London, before he heard that Miss Clyde had rejected Captain Denbigh, and that her conduct was severely commented upon by the whole neighbourhood. Though receiving all the reports which reached him with certain reservations, and quoting against them his favourite lines, "Is it anybody's business?" he could not help being, in reality, strangely puzzled by Beatrice, and somewhat inclined to blame her. Yet,

whenever he met her, he fell under the fascination of her influence, admired her ardently, and believed her worthy of more than mere admiration.

Soon after his arrival, he received an invitation to dine with his mother and sister at the Palace. The party was not a large one, consisting, besides the Constables, of Mr. and Mrs. Lyttelton, Dora and Fred, the Carletons, and Colonel Morley.

Helen Lyttelton having, since her engagement, adopted the foolish custom of retiring in a great measure from society, Dora was, commonly, the Miss Lyttelton who represented the family.

Mrs. Clyde did not dine with her guests, but she was well enough to appear in the drawing-room afterwards, and here Lionel saw her for the first time. Notwithstanding her weak state, she looked extremely well; indeed, it was a remarkable fact that on days when there was company at the

Palace, Mrs. Clyde generally both looked and felt better than at other times, and found herself able to go down-stairs in the evening, a very rare occurrence when only her husband and daughter were present.

She was rather struck with Lionel, and kept him talking to her for some time, dilating chiefly on the virtues of Beatrice, a favourite theme with her, though always pursued most innocently. No one could suspect Mrs. Clyde of being a designing mother, though her weakness might furnish some amusement. Lionel had, as yet, scarcely spoken to Beatrice; he had taken Dora Lyttelton into the dining-room, and had been separated, by several people, from Beatrice. He had heard her laughing and talking with Mr. Carleton and Colonel Morley, and his ear had distinguished something sad and forced in her tones. A peculiarity slight indeed, and such as he would not have noticed, had he not been once, in

some degree, admitted behind the conventional veil which Beatrice placed between herself and the world. He could detect the hollow ring in her voice even now, as it reached him from the other end of the room, where she was sitting between his sister Amy and Dora Lyttelton. How different she looked from either the pretty, innocent-looking girl, or the serene, self-satisfied young lady! There was a certain wildness about Beatrice which penetrated through the ordinary lady-like propriety of her dress and appearance—a restless fire about her eyes and movements, piercing through all the restraints of assumed indifference—a betrayal of something within, which seemed as if it must find vent or else consume her with vain longings and fruitless repinings. Lionel experienced a sense of pain in watching her, and trying to interpret the changing hues and lines of a countenance she herself imagined so well

schooled. Capable of self-control as she really was, her whole face, nay, her whole frame, was too readily respondent to every fine change within her not to reveal, to observant eyes, that she was not either the mere fashionable flirt or the dignified automaton which she tried to appear in turn.

Music gave Lionel an excuse for leaving Mrs. Clyde; all the young people gathered round the piano, and he joined the group. The drawing-room at the Palace was long, and rather narrower at one end than at the other, forming a kind of recess terminating in a large bay window. The piano stood across the entrance to this narrower portion of the room, which was thus cut off from the rest, and served as an admirable place for a *tête-à-tête*.

Lionel presently found himself, he knew not how, seated with Dora Lyttelton in the recess, listening to the singing of Beatrice

Clyde, but having his attention frequently distracted by the remarks of his companion, which, though chiefly in praise of Beatrice, produced in him a feeling of strong irritation against some one—whether Beatrice or Dora he could hardly decide.

"Will you sing 'The Canteeneer,' Miss Clyde?" asked Dora, in her blandest tones, during a pause.

"I would rather not," said Beatrice; "I will sing something more likely to please generally," and she struck the first notes of Kingsley's "Three Fishers."

But Colonel Morley, who had been turning over her music, had just discovered "The Canteeneer," and he placed it upon the desk before her, saying,

"Do sing this, Miss Clyde, it is capital, and you will do justice to it."

Beatrice took her fingers from the keys, and deliberately put the song aside.

"Excuse me, Colonel Morley, I was

beginning another song, and I do not wish to be interrupted."

"Then afterwards?" said Colonel Morley; but Beatrice only shook her head, and began singing "Three Fishers" from memory.

"What is 'The Canteeneer' like?" asked Lionel of Dora.

"Oh! don't you know it?" said Dora; and she went up to the piano and returned with the song, which she gave to Lionel.

He read it through, and said,

"I dare say it is very effective, if well sung."

"It suits Miss Clyde admirably; better than any of her songs. I wish you would ask her to sing it?"

"She has already refused," said Lionel, "and I can understand her objection. I am sure you would refuse to sing it yourself before a mixed audience."

"I am not Miss Clyde," returned Dora,

"and her scruples are quite new. I have heard her sing 'The Canteeneer,' and I am not the only person who has done so. However, I suppose she favours particular people."

"Colonel Morley, it appears, has not heard her," said Lionel.

"Colonel Morley does not go out so much as many of the 121st officers do," said Dora, significantly; "however, the matter is not very important—it is of no consequence to us whether or not Miss Clyde has sung it before a whole brigade."

"Certainly not," said Lionel, with a peculiar smile, which Dora did not quite like.

When Beatrice had finished her song, she gave up her place to Dora, and joined Amy Constable and Mr. Carleton, who were sitting at a little distance from the piano.

Lionel turned over the leaves of Dora's

music for a short time, and then, taking literally her words, that he made her nervous, he left his post, and went up to Beatrice. Mr. Carleton was endeavouring to persuade her to go to Railton, during the approaching assize week, to listen to the eloquence of a celebrated barrister.

"You will add your persuasions to mine, I am sure, Constable," he said, as Lionel drew near. "Ought Miss Clyde to miss this opportunity of hearing Hawkins? She says she has never been inside a court of law in her life."

"It does not do to recommend one's own wares," said Lionel, "but still I feel bound to say that I think Miss Clyde would be interested. If we could hear of a good cause in the Nisi Prius——"

"Oh! why not in the Criminal Court, Lionel?" interrupted Amy; "I am sure it is far the most interesting."

"I am shocked at your depraved taste,

Amy," said her brother, with mock solemnity; "I am afraid you are like a girl I once overheard, coming out of court, saying she had heard nothing worth listening to; she liked a real good murder the best, but a regular burglary, with thieves in black masks, was not bad."

"Well, but without going in for murders or robberies, have we a chance of hearing Serjeant Hawkins?" asked Beatrice.

"Of course you have," said Mr. Carleton; "you can hear him in that contested will case, which is making such a noise here. And if you go to Railton you must have luncheon with us. You must come, too, Lionel, and bring your sister."

"I should like it very much," began Amy, "but——"

"Don't make any buts," said Beatrice, "you can drive with me, you know."

"And I will ride over and take you both into court," said Lionel, eagerly.

"We are settling it all without letting Mrs. Carleton know how we are going to take her by storm," said Beatrice.

"Oh, my wife is always delighted to see her friends," said Mr. Carleton. "Here, Louisa, come and assure these people that they may make their appearance at luncheon any day next week, without incurring your displeasure."

Mrs. Carleton crossed the room to hear what was going on, and then confirmed the invitation with some heartiness. Beatrice had risen in her favour in proportion as she had lost it with the world in general; besides, she always made a point of adopting her husband's plans in public.

"What is it you are arranging, Beatrice?" said Mr. Clyde, who had caught some words of the discussion during a pause in Dora's playing. He was standing at no great distance with Mr. Lyttelton, and both gentlemen turned towards the group,

which was now the noisiest in the room. Beatrice explained, and then Mr. Carleton said:—

"Perhaps you will come, too, Mr. Clyde; the case will be worth hearing?"

"No, thank you; I am not fond of law, and avoid hearing more of it than I am obliged."

"That is right," said Mr. Lyttelton. "I am quite of your opinion. Law causes half the misery in the world—no offence to you, Lionel Constable. There's my own boy, Sydney, going to be a lawyer, and I don't half like it—but what can one do with boys now-a-days? As for hearing cases, I would not enter Railton Court-house to hear the best barrister that ever spoke. I have been on the grand jury before now, and that is enough to satisfy any man with law."

"I suppose, though, you have formed an opinion about this case," said Mr. Carleton; "the contested will at Ashberry?"

"The late Mr. Robson's? Yes, I have heard a good deal about it from different people, and my impression is that the lawyer who made it is a rascal. If I had anything to do with it I'd have him transported, and with a vengeance—that's what I'd do, law or no law!"

"But he is not to be brought to trial," said Mr. Carleton; "an attempt is only made to prove the will invalid, on account of Mr. Robson having been of unsound mind when he made it."

"I don't understand the case exactly," said Beatrice.

"So far as I have heard, it is this," said Lionel. "An old man makes a will, leaving all his property away from his relations to his young wife; the relations dispute the will, on the score of his insanity, and the lawyer who made the will is suspected by some people of having used undue influence."

"There is no doubt about it," said Mr. Lyttelton.

"It appears very unlikely to me," said Mr. Clyde, "that a man who had any position to lose would commit a folly so likely to compromise him, without benefiting him in any remarkable manner."

"Lionel forgot to say, in stating the case," said Mr. Carleton, "that whatever influence the lawyer used was backed up by the wife; and that before the relations raised this question, it was generally understood that the two were going to be married."

"It seems altogether an iniquitous business," said Mr. Clyde; "but I am still unable to understand how a man could place himself in such a situation. He must have known that he would soon be suspected, and I should think would have been ready to sacrifice anything rather than run the risk of having his honor questioned."

"Would you have had him refuse to make the will?" asked Lionel.

"Certainly, if anything made it likely that he would be suspected of having any interest in it."

"But if he knew himself to be innocent?" said Lionel.

"Even then caution would be advisable in such a case," said Mr. Clyde; "if scandal had in any way coupled his name with Mrs. Robson's, he should have been the last man in the world to make the will."

"You may be right," said Lionel, "but if all were equally scrupulous, much work would remain undone in the world."

"I am sure, Mr. Constable, you would not yourself undertake any business likely to call your honor in question," said Mr. Clyde.

"I don't know. I would not, I hope, undertake any business really dishonourable; but I am not sure that I should let

scruples as to what construction might be put upon my actions affect me. Duty sometimes compels one to allow even one's honor to be questioned—to keep one's integrity pure, one may be obliged to let one's honor suffer a seeming stain."

Mr. Clyde did not reply, but moved away to another part of the room. Lionel turned to Beatrice, whose eyes were fixed upon him with a peculiar intense expression. She dropped them suddenly, and Lionel said:—

"Do you share your father's antipathy to law, Miss Clyde?"

"No, not at all. I think it rather interesting, and should like to know more of it. There are many questions I should be glad to settle in my own mind—women know so little of law."

"You had better read Blackstone; the study would not harm you, though it would not make you a lawyer."

"But there is so much of it," said Beatrice.

"Well, if you like abridgements, I can lend you some," said Lionel—"and with the addition of my valuable notes too."

"Thank you; I shall remind you of your promise," said Beatrice; then, becoming aware that Dora Lyttelton was near, and had probably overheard the last few sentences, she rose and went to speak to her mother.

Lionel could not attend to the little speeches Dora languidly let fall; he was watching the pretty *tableau* at the end of the room, where Beatrice, having carefully arranged her mother's cushions and footstool, was tenderly bending over her. The beauty of the two was strikingly apparent when they were together, and the attachment between them most artlessly shown.

But a remark of Dora's fell like cold water on Lionel's ardent admiration. It

was complimentary to Beatrice, yet contained something which gave an impression that what appeared so simple and beautiful was only a form of attraction.

"Miss Clyde," said Colonel Morley, a little later in the evening, "are you quite determined not to give us 'The Canteeneer'? I hear so much of your manner of singing it, and it is unfair only to favour some with it."

"I dare say you would not like it," said Beatrice, "and I have sung enough for to-night."

"Beatrice, my dear, do not be disobliging," said Mrs. Clyde; "if the song is really pretty why do you not sing it?"

"It is not very pretty, mamma."

"It sounded so, as you sang it the other night," said Dora, in a low voice, to Beatrice; "but I suppose it does not suit every audience."

"I will sing it to please you, if you wish,"

said Beatrice aloud; "but only those who particularly want to hear it need attend."

She went to the piano, accompanied by Dora and Colonel Morley, and Lionel Constable followed. Now that she had been in some measure defied to sing the song, she determined to throw herself thoroughly into it, and she gave it with an expression which enchanted Colonel Morley. Lionel admired her spirit and piquancy, but could not help wondering whether she often sang such songs in society. When she had finished, she returned to her mother, walking past Colonel Morley and Dora, without paying any attention to their admiring remarks.

"I don't think you appreciated the song much," said Dora to Lionel, a few moments afterwards. "To be sure, it does not address itself to one of your profession."

"I hope you do not think my taste so narrow," said Lionel; "besides, I have

always understood, from musical people, that the words of a song don't go for much; and if they did, I cannot imagine that songs addressed to barristers would have anything very lively or picturesque about them; they might succeed, perhaps, in being pathetic.

Dora had no time to reply, for her mother was making the signal of departure, and she dutifully rose at once. The party broke up directly afterwards, and Lionel shook hands with Beatrice, feeling that her character was as much a mystery to him as ever.

CHAPTER XI.

A HALF-RECOGNITION.

LIONEL CONSTABLE met Beatrice and Amy at the Carletons' door, on the morning of the following Thursday, and hurried them off, as soon as Mrs. Carleton was ready to accompany them, to hear the disputed will case. Good places were found, and they were soon interested in listening to evidence, and to the powerful pleading of Serjeant Hawkins.

"What would Mr. Clyde say now?" said Lionel to Beatrice, soon after their arrival; "he would not believe that the lawyer who

made the will had any interest in the matter; and yet, I have just heard that he has absconded, which looks suspicious."

"Papa cannot imagine that any one would risk his honor, for the sake of any benefit," said Beatrice. "There are few people so sensitive on this point as he is."

"Well, I can imagine this unfortunate lawyer to have been sensitive also," said Lionel; "otherwise, he would not have run away now, to avoid the shame of exposure. I cannot understand that kind of sensitiveness myself, but I know it exists. If you have done wrong, why, stay and bear the blame; it must be just as bad to know that you are abused behind your back."

"It is a misfortune, when people are so sensitive to possible shame, that they will do wrong things to escape it," said Beatrice.

"Yes; and it is quite different from the shame which would keep them from doing wrong in the first instance. A sensitive

conscience is one thing—a sensitive vanity another."

Beatrice coloured painfully as Lionel spoke, and seemed very thoughtful for a minute or two. He tried in vain to discover anything in his words which could have affected her, and presently began speaking on some different subject.

When the whole party were satisfied with what they had seen and heard in Court, Mrs. Carleton proposed taking Amy to see an old lady, a friend of hers, who had also been formerly acquainted with Mrs. Constable, and had lately come to live at Railton; and Beatrice, remembering that she wanted some books at the library, Lionel offered to accompany her there. The four divided into two parties, arranging to meet an hour hence, for luncheon, at the Carletons' house.

Beatrice and Lionel proceeded down a street at right angles with the Court-house,

and, in turning the corner, almost knocked against a man who was hurrying along. After he had passed, Beatrice stood still for an instant, looking after him. She had turned very pale, and Lionel saw that she trembled. Suddenly collecting herself, she began to walk with a rapid step, saying to Lionel,

"I am afraid you think me very strange, Mr. Constable; but that man's face reminded me of one I saw many years ago, and I could not help looking after him, to see if he were the same person."

"He went towards the Court-house," said Lionel. "If you wish to satisfy yourself, we can turn round and pass him. He is, probably, still outside; for there is a considerable crowd to get through."

"I should like it," said Beatrice; "though it is of no real consequence to me."

They turned back, and passed the Court-house: in the midst of a group on the

steps, Beatrice recognised the man she sought. Lionel, who had scarcely noticed him before, now observed him attentively. He was a short, stout man, with a round face; small, black, bead-like eyes; hair and whiskers that had evidently been black also, but were now grizzled; the lower part of the face thick and heavy, and ending in a double chin. His age might have been between forty and fifty, and his appearance was that of a small tradesman or clerk. Lionel marvelled much what interest Beatrice could have in a person of this description; and was still more astonished when she touched his arm, and displaying a face perfectly blanched with some strange emotion, and working painfully in every feature, said,

"Let us turn—I am satisfied."

"You recognise the man, I suppose?"

"Yes. Don't say any more."

They walked on for some moments in silence.

Many thoughts struggled within Lionel's breast: wonder at the singularity of Beatrice's behaviour; conjectures as to her possible connection with this man—doubt, pity. The last was, after all, the predominant feeling; pity for her evident suffering. That this man had some power over her, Lionel could not but conclude; why else did the sight of him call forth such manifest emotion?—seeming almost like dread. And yet, he had not appeared to notice her; nor had she expected him to do so, or she would have shrunk from exposing herself a second time to his view.

Meanwhile, Beatrice walked on, forgetful, apparently, where she was going, or that any one was with her.

Lionel stopped opposite the library, and then she started, like a person waking from a dream, went in, and inquired for her books in a calm, collected manner. But he could see that she was still very unlike her-

self; and, unable to bear the sight of her distress, he said, as soon as they were in the street again,

"Miss Clyde, pray do not think me impertinent, but I cannot help seeing that the sight of that man has made you uncomfortable; if anything can be done to give you rest ——"

"Oh!" said Beatrice, "there is no use in referring to the subject—I begged you not."

"I know: but if I could do anything—make inquiries for you—anything you entrusted to me would be sacred."

"There is nothing to do," said Beatrice; "the man reminded me of some one—that is all."

"Then he is not really the person you thought?"

"I don't know—the likeness is remarkable, but whether he is or not does not signify."

She spoke decidedly, but Lionel saw that a shiver ran through her frame.

"I wish I were a friend of yours, Miss Clyde," said he, impulsively; "I mean, I wish that you would let me consider myself one. In such a case, no power on earth should hinder me from doing something to give your mind relief. It is terrible to see a woman suffer!—and you do suffer—you try to conceal it, but your strength fails you. Nay, Miss Clyde, you must hear me," and he turned, as he spoke, into a quiet road which led towards the Carletons' house; "I have watched you, impelled by an irresistible interest, and I can see that you are not the happy, careless being you try to appear."

"Mr. Constable," interrupted Beatrice, drawing herself up with dignity, "I cannot bear this intrusion into my private affairs."

"I do not wish to intrude—I am sorry that my words gave such an impression," said Lionel, in a calmer tone; "I only intended to say that, if it be possible for me

to do anything for you, you may command my services by night or day—I would say the same to any woman who appeared as unhappy as I cannot help saying you do."

Beatrice remained silent for a moment; then she said,

"It is impossible to be offended with you, and I do not know any one whose help I would ask more readily, but I do not see how it could be in your power to lessen any unhappiness there may be in my life. You are almost a stranger to me—I do not quite mean that," she corrected herself, with a sudden smile, which brightened and softened her whole face—"I mean that you do not know any circumstances about me; and if there are any of a nature to cause me suffering, you could neither enter into them, nor help me to escape them."

"Perhaps not," said Lionel, "and but for the incident of to-day I should never,

though suspecting that you were not quite happy, have ventured to speak as I have done. It struck me that perhaps, as you appeared so strangely affected by the sight of that man, you might like to know what brought him here—I could ascertain it for you easily; and that was the only definite service I had in my mind when I spoke of your commanding me."

Beatrice thought for a minute.

"I think I should like to be sure that he was the man. If you could find out the man's name, Mr. Constable, and his business here, I should be obliged to you."

"I will do so most certainly," said Lionel; and they did not exchange more words till they reached the house. Mrs. Carleton and Amy were in the hall, having just arrived, and Beatrice went upstairs directly with the latter, to take off her bonnet.

As soon as she had entered the room, she sat down in an arm-chair, and leant back

with an air of such exhaustion that Amy was quite alarmed.

"What is the matter, Miss Clyde? How pale you look!—can I do anything for you?" she exclaimed, flying to the washing-stand, and pouring out some cold water—the grand remedy, in her estimation, for every ill, mental and physical.

But Beatrice did not heed the water; she waved it away, and burying her face in the cushions, gave vent to two or three gasping sobs. Amy, more frightened than before, spoke of going for Mrs. Carleton, but Beatrice, seizing her hands, almost commanded her to stay, and, by a violent effort, restrained any further display of agitation.

At luncheon she talked with more than usual animation, not, however, to Lionel, but to Mr. Carleton and Colonel Morley, who had just dropped in.

Yet the burning flush which had succeeded

her paleness, betrayed something of the tumult within her, and once more Lionel found himself pondering over the problem which her demeanour presented to him. Half-angry with himself for the interest he felt in a person who was nothing, never could be anything to him, he seized the first opportunity, after luncheon, of slipping away; not, however, acting in a likely manner to make him forget her concerns, since he proceeded at once to fulfil the commission she had given him.

Beatrice guessed where he had gone, and a sudden heart-sickness attacked her; she could no longer answer Colonel Morley's badinage, and, as an excuse for silence, she took up a book that lay on the table. It was a volume of passionate love-poetry, and she threw it down again, almost immediately, with such an impetuous movement, that Mr. Carleton approached to see what had caused such apparent displeasure.

"Ah! Owen Meredith," he said; "well, I suppose he is too high-flown and romantic for you, Miss Clyde, but he has written some sweet little things." And he opened the book, and turned over the leaves. "'Once' and 'Since,'" he said, "have you read those lines, Miss Clyde?"

"No," said Beatrice.

"Then you must hear them, they are good of the kind;" and without further remark he read the two poems aloud.

"Don't they give one a terrible feeling of destiny?" he said, when he had finished.

"Perhaps; but the case was, after all, not so bad as it might have been."

"What! not the separation?—the uncertainty of each other's feelings, the dread of broken faith?"

"All these things are bad enough, I daresay; but still the fate was not irretrievable —anything short of that may be borne."

"Upon my word, Miss Clyde, your ideas

of suffering must be wonderful, if you cannot pity the lovers in 'Once' and 'Since!'"

"I don't say I do not pity them," said Beatrice, "I only think the man made more fuss than was necessary; I daresay he managed to lead a very comfortable life after all."

"Oh! Miss Clyde, what a dreadfully unsentimental person you must be! I don't believe, however, you mean all you say."

"Let me show you my favourite, Miss Clyde," said Colonel Morley, drawing near; and, taking up the book, he turned to the poem of "Madame la Marquise," and showed it to Beatrice.

"The picture is very pretty," she said, when she had read it; "one can quite see the elegant, luxurious Marquise."

"Ah! but you have not observed the best line," said Colonel Morley; and he repeated,

"But what the heart's like, we must guess!"

"It is a stale remark, I think," said Beatrice; "women have been accused of heartlessness from all eternity, and it is not worth while to refute the charge."

"But the Marquise is not accused of heartlessness, she is only incomprehensible."

"Well, I like an incomprehensible woman," said Mr. Carleton—"she is so piquante."

"Painfully so, sometimes," said Colonel Morley; "except for those who look upon her as a study."

Beatrice made no remark; she was weary of answering Colonel Morley's covert hits, and she closed the book, left the table, and seated herself near the window, looking into the wintry garden, and catching through the leafless branches the distinct outlines of the cathedral. The bells just then chimed the hour, and the sound boomed with long

echoes through the frosty air. To Beatrice's excited fancy it seemed the solemn toll of destiny; and she experienced, for the moment, that wild longing which sometimes seized her, to rush out of herself, to emancipate herself from the bitter thraldom of individuality—even to sink into annihilation. Such moments always appeared to her, on retrospection, filled with madness; and even, whilst they endured, a dread of losing all self-possession was latent within her, and she was glad to lay hold on any trifling, external matter to command her attention and drown thought. She was on the point of asking to see Mrs. Carleton's work, hoping to get up a little fictitious interest about it, when Lionel re-entered the room, and she sat still, feeling instinctively that he was going to speak to her. He came up, and said, in a low voice,

"The name is Richard Barker. The man is some sort of clerk in London, and came

here as witness in some case or other. His evidence was of no great importance; and he leaves the town to-morrow, I understand. The trial was purely concerning a business transaction, and I do not know all particulars, but I can make them out if you wish."

"Oh, no; it cannot concern me; and the name is not the one I expected."

"Yet, I thought you recognised the man's face."

"I fancied so; but I might be mistaken. However, it is of no consequence, and I am sorry I troubled you about the affair. I shall be glad if you will never allude to it again."

"I will not," said Lionel; and the subject ended.

They continued talking, however, on other topics, until Beatrice thought it was time for her and Amy to leave. Yet she rose regretfully; the last half-hour had obliterated, in some degree, the painful impres-

sions she had received during the day. Lionel was so chivalrous in sentiment and act, so full of high hopes and ardent impulses, that her own spirit seemed to spring from its crushed state as she heard him; and she could dream of interests that would absorb her nature to the exclusion of private cares. She felt her mental activity invigorated, and a new impetus given to her to study and to work; to abstract her own individual sorrows from the higher part of her nature, and to find rest and freedom from them in the inexhaustible wealth of thought which lay spread before her.

The drive home was rather a silent one: Amy's talk, though pleasant and intelligent, could not satisfy Beatrice just then; and Amy herself, fancying her companion was tired, left her to her own meditations.

Beatrice could not have accounted to herself for the influence Lionel Constable was beginning to exercise over her; she

would, perhaps, have denied that he did exercise any, yet it was certain that a change did gradually steal over her life, and that a discussion with him always left her happier.

They met frequently during this Christmas visit, and, although they seldom had exclusive conversation together, although there was nothing in the manner of Beatrice that could be construed by the world into a repetition of her behaviour towards Captain Denbigh, yet they each felt irresistibly drawn towards the other. Beatrice fancied, sometimes, that she had found the partial friendship—the half-sympathy which was the utmost, she believed, it would be ever her lot to receive. On intellectual ground, she and Lionel could meet with satisfaction; and his genial character was pleasant to her as a study, from being so different, she imagined, to her own, and yet so like what her nature might possibly have expanded to under favouring circumstances.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE fierce heat of the day—one of the last in July—was over, and in the soft twilight Beatrice Clyde and Amy Constable were sitting on the little lawn in front of the Laurels. Beatrice had been spending the day there, an occurrence not very unusual, now that her mother's health was so much improved as to make her presence less required at home. The last six months, though they had brought little external change to Beatrice, had not passed without producing a wide difference in her inner

life. She fancied, indeed, that she had left the whole past behind her; and that the more extended views she had gained would prevent her ever giving way in future to the wild, passionate longings and bitter repinings of former days. She had read much during this interval, and her books had been of a different stamp from those which her father had recommended to her, and her opinions had ranged far beyond those which he had endeavoured to instil into her. She had felt cramped and bounded before, and her intellectual pursuits had not been enough to satisfy her; but now she trusted in their full efficacy to preserve her from depression, and from too close a contemplation of herself and the circumstances surrounding her; nay, seen by her new lights, how small did everything individual appear when brought into contact with the Infinite!

"Don't you think mamma will be ex-

pecting us to go in to tea?" said Amy, breaking the long silence which had lasted between her and Beatrice.

"Perhaps; but it is so delicious—I was looking at the lovely greenish light Venus is shedding just now; is it not an exquisite colour? I feel sure Venus is passing through the age of vegetation—if one could but see the thick forests and interlacing ferns! Don't you wish we could annihilate time and space, and wander at will in distant worlds?"

"Yes," said Amy, "but I can never feel so sure as you and Lionel do about those distant worlds—and—I don't know how to express myself—but the immensity frightens me—I think I would rather believe that we, on this earth, were the only created beings. The other idea makes one feel so lost—so nothing—"

"Well, I don't think that idea at all depressing," said Beatrice; "the less important

we are, the better; the less we think of ourselves and our own trivialities, the happier we shall be."

At this moment the garden-gate opened; there was the tramp of a man's feet on the gravel, and instantaneously Amy and Beatrice started forward, exclaiming respectively, "Lionel!" "Mr. Constable!"

"What has brought you here before your time, Lionel?" asked Amy, after the first excitement of welcoming her brother had passed.

"Only that the weather was knocking me up, and gave me an excuse for coming down a few days earlier. I only determined upon my journey last night, so I did not think it worth while to write."

"*You* knocked up, Lionel! I thought nothing ever did you any harm. I hope you are not really ill?"

"Ill! oh, no!" and Lionel's cheery voice indicated that the injury his health had sus-

tained had not been very important; "I only felt sufficiently unlike myself to think I was justified in taking a holiday, and I feel recovered already."

Lionel moved towards the house to seek his mother, and Amy ran after him, returning, however, for Beatrice. But Beatrice fancied the joy of the family meeting would be more unrestrained without her, and saying she would enter presently, she lingered for a few minutes on the lawn. She was truly glad to see Lionel Constable again, and she felt as if, in him, she met an old friend. During his absence she had studied many of the books which he had mentioned as his favourites, and her new form of thought had been, unconsciously, moulded by him. She longed to converse with him, now that her ideas of life were so greatly enlarged, and so much happier, now that she felt she could understand him so much better, and that she would no longer

be so likely to shock him by cynical speeches.

As she stood thus, thinking about Lionel, and the change in herself, his voice called her name from the porch, and she hastened to meet him. He looked at her rather intently as she entered the house, and passed into the lamp-light of the hall, as if desirous of seeing if the past months had brought any change to her countenance.

Yes: she was altered, and for the better; she looked at once calmer and more open and candid — and the expression was no fleeting one. When they were all seated at tea, the light of happiness which illumined her features was still present; and as she joined in the familiar domestic chat of his mother and Amy, Lionel felt a sudden thrill of joy shoot through him, and experienced an inexplicable longing to stay the present moment in its flight.

Beatrice was, indeed, in radiant spirits, all unlike the flighty animation of other

days; and no staid devotee of propriety could have been shocked with her now.

"Oh, mother," said Lionel, after he had been laughing with the girls at some ludicrous experience they had been narrating, "I must not forget to tell you that the Collingwoods talk of paying you a visit. I went down to Richmond to see our worthy cousin, and found him in a state of delight with his new wife; and he told me you had given them a general invitation, which they thought of accepting shortly, on their way to or from Scarborough."

"And so you saw Mrs. Collingwood! What sort of person is she?"

"Oh, wondrously agreeable and cordial: not old, and not bad-looking. A little bit of a woman; rather too much of a talker. I don't think you will do with her long, mother—she will talk you to death."

"Then, I am sure, I wonder how she and Sam Collingwood get on," said Mrs. Con-

stable; "for he is one of the most inveterate talkers I know."

"I don't know how they manage in private," said Lionel; "but in public, each pounces upon a separate victim, and pours forth a stream of never-ending talk. No, I should not say a stream in both cases; the lady's is more of a torrent, broken occasionally by obstructing rocks and stones—namely, appeals to the listener, and short pauses for his answers; whereas Mr. Collingwood's talk flows in a smooth, level stream, undisturbed by even the most startling contradiction."

"Most wearisome people they must be," said Amy.

"You must often escape to me during their visit," said Beatrice.

"And leave my mother and me to wrestle with them alone?" said Lionel. "I call that unkind, Miss Clyde."

"Doubtless, you will be able to support

Mrs. Constable through all difficulties," said Beatrice; "with your valuable help, she will not require Amy's. Are your friends lately married?"

"Not very long ago," said Mrs. Constable; "the lady was a widow, and Amy and I have never seen her. Mr. Collingwood, my relation, seemed a regular old bachelor, and I was glad to hear of his marrying. From all I can hear, he has made a suitable choice, in spite of what Lionel says of the lady's talking powers."

"I wonder," said Amy, "whether she knows that he was once jilted."

"Was he jilted in reality?" asked Lionel.

"Yes; it is an old story," said Mrs. Constable; "you have heard it, only you have forgotten. He was engaged some years ago to a young lady—much younger than himself—and she broke off the match after the wedding-day was fixed, the people invited, dresses ready, and everything arranged."

"She ought to have known her mind rather sooner," said Lionel.

"She never really cared about him, I understood," said Mrs. Constable; "but was persuaded by her friends to accept him, and when the time drew near she felt, I suppose, that she could not fulfil her engagement."

"Well, I think, if I had let the affair go so far, I should never have had courage to break it off," said Amy; "fancy how one would be talked about!"

"It was her best plan, even then, to break it off," said Beatrice.

"But when the marriage was so near, one would have felt so bound, I think," said Amy.

"No engagement should bind me," said Beatrice, "if I found I could not love the man I had promised to marry. It would be better to bear any amount of blame from the world than to let the knot become irre-

vocable. After marriage there is no escape."

She spoke earnestly, and at the last words her voice sank into a low, impressive tone. She seemed as if she had forgotten her auditors, and her eyes had a far-looking, wild gaze, as if she were contemplating some imaginary scene with dread and repugnance. Lionel's glance was fixed upon her, and as she became conscious of it, she gave a half-shudder, and recalled her senses to common life again.

"Talking of marriages," said Lionel, after a pause, during which he had been musing upon the perplexing changes in Beatrice's manner; "is not that of Helen Lyttelton and Tom Heywood about to be celebrated?"

"Yes," said Amy; "the day is all but fixed. You will come in for that wedding, and, of course, it will be a grand affair. I know I am to be a bridesmaid, and you, Beatrice, are to be asked."

"I hope not," said Beatrice, hastily.

"Have you been a bridesmaid so often already, that you fear to lose your chance of being a bride by filling the office again?" asked Lionel.

"No," said Beatrice; "but I have an invincible repugnance to the thing." Then more lightly, she added, "We have been so quiet lately, that one shrinks from being disturbed in any way, and made to think of dress and gaiety."

"You are changed, then, since I first knew you," said Lionel; "at that time you were ready to undergo any amount of fatigue in the service of society."

"Yes," returned Beatrice, with a slight blush; "but I never have continued six months in the same frame of mind, and I don't suppose I ever shall."

"Perhaps you have also changed some notions which I considered heretical," said Lionel, in a low voice.

"I cannot bear cross-questioning," Bea-

trice replied aloud, and she proceeded to ask his opinion of a book about which she and Amy had differed.

The rest of the evening passed pleasantly, and the carriage for Beatrice arrived too soon to suit any one. Lionel and Amy went with her to the gate, and the night was so lovely that it was proposed they should all walk a little way down the road, sending the carriage forward to wait at a certain point."

This walk was not the only one the two took together, and in which the conversation, though not absolutely exclusive between Beatrice and Lionel, was yet mainly conducted by them, every remark made by either of them being unconsciously directed to the other.

Three weeks passed—weeks which, in one sense, seemed to fly like magic, and in another to extend into years, so full they were of life and vivid sensation. It was

glorious weather, and Beatrice lived much out of doors. Lionel had a horse, and he hired a pony for Amy, employing himself industriously in teaching her to ride. Naturally he and his sister often joined the Clydes, and thus added to the opportunities which he and Beatrice enjoyed of cultivating a friendship.

Mr. Clyde, satisfied with the alteration in his daughter's manner, saw her intimacy with Lionel without fear; the topics discussed by the two, in his hearing, were of so elevated a nature that anything approaching flirtation appeared utterly incongruous with them, and he, like the parties concerned, was lulled into carelessness.

One evening, they were all returning home from a long ride, and Amy and Mr. Clyde were a little in advance of the other two. Beatrice had just been expatiating upon her present favourite theory—the nothingness of the individual, the grandeur

of the universal, carrying it so far as to make each separate life, with its joys and sorrows, its loves and hatreds, appear of no importance. She had first gathered the notion from Lionel, but had worked it out far beyond his intentions.

"You are getting rather too philosophical for my sympathies, Miss Clyde," he said, with a slight air of annoyance; "according to you, every particular affection has no worth, and one's own happiness, and the happiness of other people, subjects of perfect indifference; in short, if you were followed, all that makes the grace and glory of life would be at an end; there would be no more love—no more friendship; nothing but a barren sentiment of good-will towards the whole universe, so wide as to be lost in the immensity of the circle it made."

"I think one might still feel friendship," said Beatrice, "though one's happiness would not be bound up in it."

"You would not care, for instance, if your friend were to die, or if an irrevocable fate were to separate you—you would still rejoice in the grandeur of the universe, in the knowledge that there existed thousands as good as the friend you had lost."

Lionel spoke impatiently, almost bitterly —as Beatrice had never heard him speak before.

"You twist my words strangely," she answered; "I should not forget a friend I had lost, but I should not, I hope, be unhappy; the knowledge that such a being existed would be a source of constant happiness. To have enjoyed a real friendship for a short time, ought to satisfy one for the rest of life—*must* satisfy—I will not have my faith taken from me."

Beatrice did not look at Lionel; her gaze was directed upwards, and there was a rapt expression of enthusiasm on her face.

"I fear your doctrines are too cold for

me," said Lionel, giving her a glance of involuntary admiration, which she could not but feel; "I like something more tangible, even in friendship, than you do; separation is a bitter trial, and I fancy, where your feelings were really roused, you would find it so. Even to lose your favourite Sultan would try your equanimity a little;" and Lionel, as he spoke, drew nearer to Beatrice, and patted the sleek neck of the horse she rode.

"One's affection for an animal is so different," said Beatrice; "one imagines that it perishes utterly, though I am often inclined to doubt even that."

"Poor Sultan! he appreciates my attentions," said Lionel, continuing to pat and stroke the animal, at once gentle and spirited, as a lady's steed should be. A singular sensation of pleasure shot through Beatrice at that instant; she knew not why it was so, but to feel that Lionel Constable

loved and caressed her horse, filled her with strange satisfaction.

"Poor old fellow!" pursued Lionel, "little you know what a stoical, hard-hearted mistress you have got—a philosophical lady, so general in her affections that she has no especial love to bestow upon you or any one. She only admires the abstract notion of a horse; you, the individual animal, are nothing to her; when you die, and 'go to your place,' she will rejoice in knowing that your abstract virtues still exist in other horses. You will never be regretted—only perhaps a faint memory of the good rides she has had on your back will remain—no longing to see you again—no sense of loss—alas! alas! for you, wretched old Sultan!"

"How can you talk such rubbish?" said Beatrice; "I am sure I thought you shared all the ideas I have just been expressing; now you wilfully misunderstand me, and turn my words to ridicule."

"Not ridicule," said Lionel, "the matter is too serious for ridicule, or rather would be, if I thought you really meant to bring down your ideas to practice."

"But if you don't believe I should—if you think me too womanish to do so—you must be ridiculing me?"

"No," said Lionel, "it was certainly not ridicule which prompted my words—but perhaps, if I try to explain what it was, I shall make matters worse."

He checked himself suddenly, and Beatrice took advantage of the pause to make an observation on the beauty of the sunset, whilst, almost at the same instant, she and Lionel, by mutual consent, quickened their speed so as to overtake the others, and the rest of the ride offered no opportunity for a renewal of their *tête-à-tête.*

Lionel sat up that night long after his mother and sister had retired, asking himself for the first time the reason of his

increasing pleasure in being with Beatrice Clyde. Was that which he felt friendship? Could he bear to share her regard with others? Did he not rather demand some exclusive feeling for himself alone? And what did he really like in her? Was she, from all he had seen, all he had heard of her, the woman whom he could wish to make his wife? She was odd, wild, flighty; she had been an atrocious flirt; she might again become one, if the whim seized her. She had been condemned by women whom he respected, as well as abused by women whom he despised. She was talked of by men in a way in which he could not have endured to hear his own sister mentioned. She had no feeling for him—she affected to be incapable of feeling at all; and if she were not, for anything he knew, she might be separated from him by the fetters of another attachment. She was encompassed by mystery—had he not himself beheld her

a prey to uncontrollable emotion, with, apparently, no adequate cause; had he not seen her frightfully agitated by the mere vision of a man with whom it was unlikely she could have any connection?

Yet—in spite of these considerations—in spite of wisdom, prudence, and the world's judgment—Lionel could not close his eyes to the fact that she was the woman of all women for him—that such as she was, with her virtues, and with her faults, she was the one who, in all his life, had most charmed his fancy and gratified his intellect—the one who could satisfy his heart.

He had lately seen in her so much to approve as well as to admire, and many important sympathies existed between them. Could he resolve to let those sympathies die away? Could he be contented to remain the mere acquaintance? Friendship alone was, he owned to himself, out of the question; a hundred signs had convinced

him, within the last few days, that between him and Beatrice simple friendship could never exist; he, at any rate, could not be satisfied without something more. He was growing jealous of her looks and tones; anxious to make her think of him rather than of the subjects discussed; impatient when hearing her blamed; feeling as if she were a part of him—as if to speak of her disparagingly were a profanity which he must avenge.

And then the thought that she might be blamed with some degree of justice came across him—it stung him to the quick to feel that she was not faultless—the being whom he had, in imagination, invested with the highest truth, purity, and goodness—she must possess them; he would believe in her against the whole world, and yet—

A coquette she had been called—a heartless woman—the very things he most detested, and he could not gainsay them.

True, of late public opinion had altered considerably respecting Beatrice; ladies had now decided that Miss Clyde had cast aside many of her flirting ways, that she was more agreeable in society, and really improved upon acquaintance! Lionel smiled sarcastically as he recalled this sentence, which he had heard repeated to his mother that very morning. To think that he should attach importance to such trash!—what one woman said of another who was her superior in everything—beauty, mind, heart—yes, heart! Beatrice had a heart—a warm and faithful one, he felt assured, if only she gave it fair play. She could feel affection, tenderness, passion—he could read the truth in her eye, and in her mobile face—she could love—ah! how she could love the man who should have power to wake her dormant heart!

But if thus richly dowered by nature, whence came that discord which ran

through her whole being, which had first betrayed itself in the cynical turn of her speeches, and in the inconsistent levity of her behaviour; which now still was visible in her exaggerated love of calmness, and in her struggle to fill her entire existence with what was only suited to fill her intellect, in striving to cast out the human from her life?

Lionel, as is usual in such cases, arrived at no conclusion; he lost himself in a reverie upon Beatrice's real and imaginary qualities, and fell asleep at length before he had determined upon what should be his future conduct regarding her.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEEPER AND DEEPER.

WHEN Beatrice returned home, the first sight that met her eyes as she entered her room was a white tarlatane dress, trimmed with mauve, held up by Larkins.

"Your dress has come, Miss," she said, "and I fear it is a misfit. It does not look at all like your figure—I can't think what Madame has been about—and the broad ribbons don't match the narrow ribbons, and——"

"Do put it away, Larkins," said Beatrice,

"I am too tired to attend to it;" and, pushing aside, rather impatiently, the flowing skirts which impeded her progress, she dashed forward to her favourite seat, the ottoman in the window. Larkins, muttering something about being ashamed to turn out such a dress if she were Madame, stowed away the offending garment into a wardrobe, and proceeded to disencumber her young mistress of her riding attire.

No sooner had Beatrice reached the drawing-room than the subject of the dress was brought forward by her mother; and though she tried to feign some interest in it, yet any one might have seen that it was a topic from which she shrank. For the white and mauve tarlatane was to be worn at Helen Lyttelton's wedding, on which occasion Beatrice had consented to act as one of the bridesmaids. It was an office for which she had a great objection, and

she would have declined, but for the decided wish of her father and the entreaties of her mother.

"Larkins is quite dissatisfied with the make," Mrs. Clyde maundered on; "she declares she will have to alter it completely before it will fit you. You ought to try it on immediately."

"I cannot to-night, mamma," answered Beatrice, "I am too tired; and as to what Larkins says, you know she always finds fault with a dress until she has altered it in some way."

"Well, I saw myself that it looked like a sack," said Mrs. Clyde; "and I wish they had not chosen mauve. I don't think it suits you at all—at any rate, not when you look as pale as you have been looking lately. You read too much—I told your father so last night."

"Dear mamma, what does it signify, for one day, whether the colour suits me or

not? And I need not wear the mauve again, if you dislike me in it. I am sure I look upon the whole affair as an infliction, and whether my dress is becoming or not is of little consequence."

"But it is natural for me to wish you to look well, and at any rate the dress ought to fit, and all the ribbons to match. Have you looked at them?"

"No, mamma," Beatrice began impatiently; and then, in a gentler tone, continued, "but I will bring them down, and we will look at them together."

"It is no use now; they will be worn by daylight, and by daylight we ought to look at them. And you are much too tired to go running about the house; I wish your father would not take you those long rides—they quite wear you out."

"Indeed, they do me good, mamma; I am much happier when I am riding than at any time," said Beatrice.

"Has Amy Constable got her dress yet?" asked Mrs. Clyde.

"I did not ask her, mamma."

"She will look nice in mauve," pursued Mrs. Clyde, "and so will Dora Lyttelton, I dare say—no doubt she chose it on that account."

"Well, mamma, if the bride's sister may not have her choice in the matter, who may?" said Beatrice.

"I wonder whether those friends the Constables expect will be here before the wedding?" said Mrs. Clyde.

"Yes, I believe so," said Beatrice, with a stifled sigh. When would her mother leave the subject of the wedding!

"They will look very well, I think — the bride and bridegroom I mean," said Mrs. Clyde. "They are of suitable heights to go together, and both good-looking—I cannot bear to see a handsome woman and a little, mean-looking man go together.

However, one cannot choose in such matters —Ah! Beatrice, I can fancy the kind of man I should like to have seen your husband."

"Dear mamma, I wish you would speak of something else," said Beatrice, casting aside her indifferent tone, and speaking with real feeling; "you know how I dislike this subject; how earnestly I have wished to avoid this wedding—do not make it harder to me than need be."

She rose from her seat, went to the piano, and occupied herself in playing such fanciful, sad *morçeaux* as occurred to her, until Mrs. Clyde said they made her melancholy, when she ceased, and, taking a book, read aloud till her mother retired to bed.

Beatrice was sitting alone in the drawing-room on the afternoon of the following day; her mother was lying down, her father out, and she was refreshing herself, after a morning spent in listening to Mrs.

Clyde's complaints on various subjects, by reading one of the exquisite descriptions in Humboldt's "Views of Nature."

The afternoon was hot and sunny outside, but the drawing-room was cool and shady, and all around was that delicious lull which makes itself felt on still summer days, and is in itself an enjoyment.

It was an hour for dreaming and airy castle-building; but Beatrice shrank from dreaming as from torment, and castle-building had been almost unknown to her youth. Yet even she found it difficult to keep up her attention; her eyes wandered from the book, and her mental vision from the gorgeous colouring bestowed by the grand naturalist on distant scenes. The wooded lanes of England rose before her, and the words of her companion in her last ride rang in her ears.

Gradually her hold relaxed of her book, and it was only when it had really slipped

from her grasp that her mind returned to its duty. She seized the volume again, and compelled herself to read. She contrived to interest herself once more in her old favourite, and she started in some surprise when Lionel Constable entered the room. It was so seldom that he called without his sister, that he seemed to think his coming required explanation. He had brought a piece of music which Amy wished to return; she was not able to come herself, as the expected visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Collingwood, were to arrive that evening.

"I interrupted your studies, I fear," said Lionel, glancing at the book which Beatrice had placed on the little work-table near her.

"Not very deep ones," she said.

"I don't know that—Humboldt requires some attention, and a sultry afternoon like this is more fitted for dreaming over the 'Lotus-eaters' than anything else—that is,

for people who are not compelled to work."

"If one really could become a Lotus-eater," said Beatrice, with a rather weary sigh; "but as one cannot, reading about them is tantalizing."

"'There is no joy but calm;' do you agree with that?" asked Lionel.

"Almost," returned Beatrice; "surely, if one could be calm and not care about any troubles and annoyances, a great deal would be gained! I believe you think so yourself; at least, you have often given me that impression."

"If I have done so, it is a very false one," said Lionel; "and whatever theories of the kind I may have had are all vanishing. I fear, if you could see within my heart at this moment, you would find much that your philosophical mind would condemn."

"You are resuming your sarcastic manner of last night, Mr. Constable," said Beatrice.

"I do not mean it," said Lionel, with earnestness; "I am speaking what I really feel, and feel with pain. I am becoming aware that you and I are looking two different ways, and that—but it is folly to talk in this way—I did not mean to talk of myself to-day; I know that the subject cannot have much interest for you."

He rose as he spoke, and, walking to the open piano, placed upon it the music he had brought.

"May I look through your songs, to see if there are any new ones?" he said, taking up a portfolio.

"If you like," said Beatrice, "but I do not think you will find any; I have not been singing much lately."

"You have been playing then, I suppose? I see some piles of classical music brought forward. which used to be at the bottom of the stand."

"Yes, they have suited my mood better."

"I see you still have 'The Canteeneer,'" said Lionel, continuing his search; "is that still a favourite?"

"It never was a favourite with me," said Beatrice, the colour flushing in her cheek. "I very seldom sang it."

"I heard it once," said Lionel.

"Don't recall that night," interrupted Beatrice; "I was foolishly teased into singing it, feeling ashamed of myself all the time. It is just one of those pert, flippant songs which I detest, and I have never sung it since. It is mortifying to think that people one despises can have such power over one; making one do hateful things out of spite."

Beatrice spoke warmly, in a quite different tone from the calm, measured one she had recently striven to adopt; and Lionel, had he felt less acutely with regard to her, would have smiled at seeing how her real nature *would* break through the

husk in which she tried to shroud herself.

He did not reply; he felt himself yielding more and more to the glamour under which Mrs. Carleton long ago had predicted he would fall, and he dreaded speaking hasty words which he might afterwards repent. For Lionel could not, even now, trust his judgment of Beatrice, and he was too proud to let love conquer reason. She was so mysterious; and until he had solved the mystery around and within her, he would not own to her his thraldom, nay, he would not permit himself to love her.

Yet, even when saying this to himself, a glance at her face was enough to overcome his resolution; he longed, with all the strong tenderness of a nature which has never truly loved before, to take her to his heart, to win from her the secret grief which was warping her really sweet and noble character, and to lead her, through his deep,

true love, to happiness, and harmony with herself and the whole world.

But would his love have power to do that? The doubt smote him with a chilling fear.—No! as he had said, they were looking two ways, and he could neither guess the riddle which Beatrice's changing features presented, nor charm away the gloom that often crossed and contracted a brow that should have been as open as it was fair.

Her voice, asking some indifferent question, roused him from his momentary thoughtfulness, and he answered her in a manner that betrayed some absence of mind. An air of constraint rested over the remainder of the interview; and Beatrice, finding Lionel so unusually grave and silent, wondered he did not leave. Yet he lingered, and even after he had risen to depart, lengthened out the moments by observations about the flowers in the stand, and

such-like trifles—things for which he ridiculed himself afterwards, and which he imagined would call forth the secret sarcasm of Beatrice. He went away feeling that he was a fool and a simpleton, and scorning himself for being thus the sport of a passion which his mind could not entirely approve.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY SAY SO.

BEATRICE did not see either Amy or Lionel Constable until the day of Helen Lyttelton's wedding, except for a few moments during a morning call she made on Mrs. Collingwood, and she could only conclude that their attention was entirely occupied by their visitors. She was both dull and unhappy, and sometimes oppressed by a morbid fancy that Mrs. Constable disapproved of her, and was exerting her influence to prevent too much intimacy between Lionel and herself.

Mrs. Clyde, too, persisted in saying every evening that she wondered Mrs. Collingwood had not returned the visit, and that it was a long time since Amy had been at the Palace. In want of a new sensation, she had looked forward to seeing a fresh face; and as the days passed and no Mrs. Collingwood appeared, she began to fancy that she was slighted, or, in other moods, to accuse Beatrice of not having left her card.

Her mother's grumbling increased the uncomfortable feelings of Beatrice, and with intense pain she yielded to the thought that she was forgotten by her friends at the Laurels.

Day by day, too, she shrank more and more from the prospect of the wedding pageant in which she was to perform a part; and she was not allowed to forget it for a long time together, since Larkins gave her little peace about her costume.

"There, miss, your dress looks like you now," said the waiting-maid, after the last stitch of her alterations had been accomplished; "and the ribbons match now; but no mortal power knows what a hunt I had in Railton after those narrow ones. This, miss, you see, matches the pattern Miss Lyttleton gave you. Where the person's eyes were who chose the other, it passes my capacity to conceive. But if I were you I would let madame know my mind."

"Thank you, Larkins, it will do very nicely now," said Beatrice, languidly; "you have managed very well."

"Mrs. Clyde was lamenting, miss, that the colour was mauve; and, indeed, I must say it is not your colour. Mrs. Lyttelton's maid told me Miss Dora looked sweet in hers. They say at the House that her wedding will be next. However, it is not for me to talk; no doubt you, miss, are better informed, but one cannot help hearing

reports. This is such a place, to be sure, for scandal."

"Indeed, I do not know what you are talking of, Larkins," said Beatrice.

"No! really, miss, I am surprised, so intimate as you are with Miss Constable. But, indeed, I have no right to say it for a fact, only Mr. Constable does go to the House a great deal, and Miss Dora has always been a favourite with Mrs. Constable, and she, they say, is one to have a voice in the matter."

"Most likely," said Beatrice, and she left the room.

She did not know what vexed her in the words she had heard, and she was accustomed to receive all the communications of Larkins with serene contempt. There was no reason why she should break through the rule now; what did it signify to her whether or not the news were true? Why should not Lionel Constable marry Dora Lyttelton?

But Beatrice checked this thought as it arose, and her cheek flushed with something like anger—she had a right, the right of friendship, to care for that which concerned Lionel Constable; a right to be annoyed at the mere supposition of his lowering himself to the level of Dora Lyttelton. Dora, who was mean, narrow, and oh! how unworthy in every sense, compared with him!—how utterly incapable of appreciating his best qualities!

Truly she was justified in shrinking from the prospect of ever seeing him mated with one like Dora Lyttelton. Yet the idea could not be cast away as improbable; men did not judge women as women judged women, and Dora possessed many attractions—arts, too, which might work upon one so inclined to look favourably upon his fellow-creatures, and so little hardened or soured even by a considerable knowledge of the world as she believed Lionel to be.

on my dressing-table. Larkins opened it yesterday, and it is quite different from that wretched stuff you brought me from Railton. You may lie down on my couch if you like, and have some tea."

"Thank you, mamma," said Beatrice, hopelessly, "but I would rather go to my own room."

When she re-appeared before her mother, some time later, in the obnoxious costume, Mrs. Clyde spoke more peevishly than ever; and Larkins's "After all, ma'am, Miss Clyde does not look so bad," was only answered by,

"I don't know where your eyes are then, Larkins—of course nothing can alter good features, but otherwise she looks a fright. There, go away, child, you will be late, and do try to brighten yourself up a little."

Beatrice however, in spite of her mother's disapproval, excited sufficient admiration when she stood amidst the group of bridesmaids.

sion, deep and true, like that she had read of in former days, and half believed, in the works of her favourite poets, but in which she now desired to have no faith. For if it really did exist—if it formed part of many lives—how poor and meagre must that life be which it did not, never could, enrich!

Ah! the old tortures were returning—the old yearnings—the unsatisfied longings. Rigid philosophy and widened views were no longer availing. Beatrice gained once more an accurate vision of the misery of her actual human life—a glimpse of missed happiness, a thrilling sense of the joy that might have been hers—but that was not now possible.

In addition to her present wretched and contradictory feelings, Beatrice had before her the misery of the approaching wedding; and on the very morning of the day, after a restless sleepless night, she went into her mother's room with haggard eyes, to make

a final attempt at escape from a position that was hateful to her.

"How silly you are, Beatrice!" said Mrs. Clyde; "I never knew any one object to being a bridesmaid, and wearing a pretty dress before—to be sure it is not pretty—there is that to be said for you. I know I would rather stay away from a place myself, than be obliged to go in maize, and that horrid mauve is just as bad for you. But you cannot avoid it—it would be so rude; and I really think, when Miss Lyttelton had so many older friends, it was pointedly attentive to choose you."

"But, mamma, it is so disagreeable to me—I cannot bear to take my place amongst those young girls—"

"Oh, that is nonsense! Now, Beatrice, how you will make yourself miserable about trifles! If I had done so, with my weak health, I should have been in the grave before this time. I am sure all your reading

and philosophizing might have given you some strength of mind. I should like to know if I have not had as much to bear as you—indeed, more, I am sure—and then you and your father are for ever harassing me with your troubles."

"Dear mamma, I am very sorry," said Beatrice, her eyes filling with tears, for she was weak, and easily unnerved that morning; "but if I might only send an excuse—I do not feel well, really."

"You look ill enough, certainly," said Mrs. Clyde, in a dissatisfied tone; "but still I cannot hear of your giving way. Have not I sat up, and talked to people to please your father, many a time when my poor back was breaking? And you need not dress just yet—why, it is quite early—Larkins has not brought me my tea yet. Just go and lie down a little, and I will send Larkins to you with some spirits of lavender—and there is some new Eau-de-Cologne

on my dressing-table. Larkins opened it yesterday, and it is quite different from that wretched stuff you brought me from Railton. You may lie down on my couch if you like, and have some tea."

"Thank you, mamma," said Beatrice, hopelessly, "but I would rather go to my own room."

When she re-appeared before her mother, some time later, in the obnoxious costume, Mrs. Clyde spoke more peevishly than ever; and Larkins's "After all, ma'am, Miss Clyde does not look so bad," was only answered by,

"I don't know where your eyes are then, Larkins—of course nothing can alter good features, but otherwise she looks a fright. There, go away, child, you will be late, and do try to brighten yourself up a little."

Beatrice however, in spite of her mother's disapproval, excited sufficient admiration when she stood amidst the group of bridesmaids.

They were all more or less good-looking, but her figure alone was enough to make her distinguished above the others, though the chosen colour was decidedly as little calculated to set off her attractions, as it was pre-eminently becoming to Dora Lyttelton.

The bride looked well and handsome in white silk and lace veil, and the wedding was pronounced a very pretty one.

Beatrice was angry with herself for watching Lionel's movements, yet she caught herself continually observing him. She saw that after the ceremony, during which she had been too much absorbed by her painful conflicting feelings to raise her eyes, he drew near Dora, and that at breakfast he was placed next her.

She fancied, also, that he rather avoided *her;* but even if he did, she had no right to be offended. She considered him her friend, and surely that was but a poor friend-

ship which could ever be exacting. Lionel had frequent opportunities of carrying on discussions of real, deep interest with her; the mere small-talk of society was not worth caring about; surely she could give that up to another without either pain or disturbance.

Besides—and Beatrice drew herself up proudly at the thought—the notice of any man, even of Lionel Constable, was not—should not be a matter of overwhelming importance to her. So she turned, and laughed and talked with her neighbour, Colonel Morley, who had just begun to think her rather dreamy and abstracted.

According to a custom in that part of the country, towards the end of the breakfast, a small bride-cake, equally divided, was handed about amongst the bridesmaids, each of whom was expected to take a portion.

A ring and a sixpence were mystically

enclosed, and she who drew the morsel containing the ring was to be the next bride, whilst the possessor of the sixpence was condemned to lead a life of single blessedness.

The ring fell to Beatrice, but she would have concealed the fact, had not Colonel Morley rendered it impossible by his exclamation. She blushed, trembled, and then turned pale, betraying altogether an emotion so little accounted for by the occasion, that curious conjectures were formed by many people as to the cause of her singular behaviour.

Long after she had collected herself, and was again talking gaily with Colonel Morley, her neighbours were occupied in discussing the subject.

"I should not wonder if Miss Clyde is not secretly engaged to some one," said Miss Heywood, one of the bridesmaids, to Fred Lyttelton; "or else she was most affected

about the ring. Have you any idea that she is engaged?"

"I don't know, I am sure," returned Fred, who was still, in a meek, unexpectant manner, devoted to Beatrice; "and for my part, I can't think she'll ever care for a fellow at all. She's just the sort of girl to make a lot of men go distracted about her, and never care a rush for any of them."

"That is the description of a dreadful flirt," said Miss Heywood; "I had heard that was Miss Clyde's character before."

"No, it's not that," said Fred; "I don't believe she is a flirt; only women say so."

"That is too bad of you, Mr. Lyttelton; as if we were all jealous. But surely there was some affair with a Captain Denbigh?"

"Yes, he was desperately in love with her no doubt, but she could not help that, you know; and he was never bitter against her, though it was well known that he had been refused. He was a fine fellow, Den-

bigh; a great loss to Railton. You see, after the affair he took a dislike to the place, so he exchanged with a brother officer and went over to Ireland, where the rest of the regiment is stationed, and now he means to exchange into another regiment going to India."

"And all that for love of Miss Clyde! She must feel some compunction at driving him out of the country."

"Oh, that is not why he is going to India; but he had always a fancy for the country. And I heard from him the other day, and he mentioned Miss Clyde most handsomely—upon my word he did, and that shows he bears no malice."

"You are speaking of Miss Clyde," put in Mrs. Newton, who was Fred's other neighbour; "don't you think, Mr. Frederick, she is looking rather pale this morning, and she flushes so, occasionally—I fear she is not so strong as she used to be."

"She blushed because she got the ring," said Miss Heywood.

"Oh, yes, I saw that, and I wondered at such a very self-possessed young person as she is appearing so disconcerted, but I suppose she had some particular cause. And really I should not be surprised to hear of her marrying any day; indeed—as I often say to Mr. Newton—it is a wonder such a very fine young woman, with, no doubt, the prospect of a fine fortune, should remain unmarried so long."

Speechifying stopped Mrs. Newton's remarks—nay, before the speech began, a glance from her husband commanded silence, for he was to be the first orator. He proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom, who were from his account paragons of perfection; diverging from the consideration of the virtues of the bride to the laudation of the excellencies and talents of the whole Lyttelton family; and, after ex-

patiating upon the probable future of the young couple, fervently hoping, and, indeed, feeling assured that Mrs. Heywood would make as worthy a wife as her mother had done. After conducting the whole family into the valley of the shadow of death, and out of it again, he wound up with a facetious hit at the eldest son, Fred, whom he said he had long been endeavouring to persuade to follow his sister's example.

The latter portion of the speech had little bearing upon the rest, but Fred was always useful to Mr. Newton as a butt, and he was much too good-natured, and his relations too greatly impressed by Mr. Newton's plausibilities and flatteries, for any of them ever to resent such behaviour.

Other speeches followed in quick succession, and were as dreamy and as stammering as is usual on such occasions; and it was a relief to most people when at length the bride arose and retired to assume her

travelling-costume. The guests formed different sets in the drawing-room, and Dora Lyttelton, who had vanished with her sister, soon re-appeared with marks of tears upon her face, and went about from group to group with elaborate courtesy, and with an air that seemed to say—

"I am doing my duty, and though my heart is breaking for the loss of a sister, I shall persevere in it."

She looked very interesting, and the tear-marks were not red enough to be disfiguring. Beatrice felt irritated whenever she glanced at Dora, and could not help wondering what Lionel was thinking of her. She was heartily glad when the bridal pair had driven away, and she was able to return home. Lionel spoke to her for the first time as he took her to the carriage, but it was only to remind her that she had promised him a valse in the evening.

She smiled, bowed, and drove off. Then she threw herself languidly back in her carriage, weary and sore at heart—incapable of understanding her sensations, and chafing against them.

Beatrice passed a great part of the afternoon in giving her mother a detailed account of the wedding, and thus she had scarcely time to analyse or brood over her thoughts, till she went to dress for the dance. She discarded the costume so disapproved by Mrs. Clyde, and appeared in a dress of snowy white, with clusters of the scarlet pomegranate in her hair. An exquisite flush had replaced her paleness, and she had never looked more brilliant than when she displayed herself before the eyes of her mother, previous to starting for Wynthorpe House.

But Mrs. Clyde was in a contradictory mood, and seemed as vexed with her daughter now for looking well, as she had

formerly been annoyed with her for looking ill.

"Well, good night, Beatrice, go and enjoy yourself if you can," she said; "it is no satisfaction to me to know you are admired; it only makes your father angry. I am sure your beauty is only a plague to yourself and everyone about you."

Beatrice kissed her mother without speaking, and went to the carriage. Hot tears gathered in her eyes; it seemed to her this night as if her mind must give way beneath the weight of the sufferings which accumulated upon her.

The false calmness of the last six months had deserted her—why, she knew not, but she felt now that it was hollow and unreal; felt, too, as if some deeper grief than she had yet experienced were about to overwhelm her. She shrank from the future with an inexplicable dread. She seemed to be trembling on the verge of a precipice,

and to be irresistibly led on by some power exterior to herself, to do deeds and think thoughts which filled her with terror.

END OF VOL. I.

R. BORN, PRINTER, GLOUCESTER STREET, REGENT'S PARK.